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JOHN WESLEY
THE MAN AND HIS MISSION





JOHN WESLEY

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THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

BY
G. HOLDEN PIKE



LONDON
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JOHN WESLEY

CHAPTER I BIRTH AND EARLY DAYS

THE character and life of John Wesley have been variously represented according to the prejudice or sympathy of individuals. The evangelist was misunderstood by those who did not understand his message. Things which Scripture declares can only be spiritually discerned, are naturally mere 'enthusiasm' to the unenlightened. There was nothing surprising in Southey's characteristic assertion, that the Revival 'was not wanted' in Scotland, and that in that country 'there was no place for it.' Before the great awakening in the early years of the reign of George II., Scotland was as much in need of spiritual religion as any other part of these islands. The manner in which the cause of Christ throughout the world has benefited by the life and testimony of Wesley should teach us that he is not to be regarded as the mere founder of Methodism. Understood in its broad and proper sense, that term embraces all who were brought into the evangelical fold, while they belonged to various denominations.

At the date of John Wesley's birth, June 17, 1703, 'good Queen Anne' had not long commenced her reign ; and religious disputes at home, and terrible wars abroad, were unfavourable to the arts of peace. Then, in November, occurred that greatest of all English recorded hurricanes, still known to historians as the Great Storm. While little John Wesley lay safely in his cot, more than a dozen men-of-war were lost, fifteen hundred seamen perished, damage to the amount of a million sterling was done in London ; and while trees were uprooted, and houses unroofed all about the country, Bishop Kidder and his wife, of Bath and Wells, were killed in their palace.

John Wesley was one of nineteen children, only ten of whom lived to be educated ; and when he was born his parents had lived in the parsonage of Epworth, Lincolnshire, for about seven years. Samuel Wesley, the father, is supposed to have been a favourite with Queen Mary and Archbishop Tillotson, both of whom died in 1694. Had the queen's life been prolonged, the rector of Epworth might have enjoyed some preferment in the Church ; but, as it was, he lived in the Lincolnshire parsonage during thirty-nine years, until his death in 1735. In days when party spirit in religious matters, as well as in politics, ran high, the rector found some enemies, and probably at times he may himself have given occasion of offence.

John Wesley came of a good stock ; for both on his father's and mother's side we find that his ancestors had a name for learning and piety. Bartholomew Wesley, his great-grandfather, was a

university man, who for some time held the vicarage of Allington, Dorset. He was one of the two thousand ministers who left the Church on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662. After his ejection from the parish, he practised as a physician. John Wesley, the son of Bartholomew, and grandfather of our subject, was a student at Oxford at the time that Dr. John Owen was Vice-Chancellor. He was afterwards stationed at Whitechurch, but suffered some persecution after the Restoration. He left two sons, Samuel and Matthew, and while the first entered the Established Church, the other became a very successful physician.

As was afterwards the case with his sons, John and Charles, Samuel Wesley was a man of mettle, an untiring worker, who was content to work hard and to suffer privation while he sought to conquer difficulties. According to Henry Moore, 'About the age of sixteen he walked to Oxford, and entered himself of Exeter College. He had now only two pounds sixteen shillings ; and no prospect of future supplies, but from his own exertions. By assisting the younger students, and by instructing any who choose to employ him, he supported himself till he took his bachelor's degree, without any preferment or assistance from his friends, except five shillings.'

While thus energetic as regarded his own affairs, Samuel Wesley was bold to speak a word in season, and not without effect. His son John told an anecdote about his father to Henry Moore, which is characteristic and encouraging. Samuel Wesley, while taking refreshment in a London coffee-house, noticed

that at another table there was a military officer, who used profane language in a shocking manner. Calling for a glass of water, he said to the waiter, 'Carry it to that gentleman in the red coat, and desire him to wash his mouth after his oaths.' The officer at once rose in a passion, and might have committed some rash act had he not been restrained by companions, who reminded him that he had himself been the first to give offence, and that it did not show good manners to swear before a clergyman. Some years later, in St. James's Park, that same officer met the man who had corrected him, and confessed with gratitude, that from the day of his adventure in the coffee-house, he had not used profane language, and he was full of gratitude to his benefactor.

Samuel Wesley married Susannah, daughter of Dr. Samuel Annesley, who in middle-life held the rectory of Cripplegate, where he had among his congregation the parents of Daniel Defoe, the future author of *Robinson Crusoe* being a child two years of age when the rector was ejected from his living in 1662. Susannah, the mother of John Wesley, has justly been considered a model woman, and certainly she was shrewd, observant, and pious to a degree not seldom equalled. In reckoning up what she called the signal mercies which had fallen to her lot, she says, 'Born in a Christian country: early initiated and instructed in the first principles of the Christian religion: good examples in parents and several of the family: good books and ingenious conversation: preserved from ill accidents, once from a violent death: married to a religious orthodox man: from

him first drawn off from the Socinian heresy, and afterwards confirmed and strengthened by Bishop Bull.'

During their residence at Epworth, the family were in very straitened circumstances, and the accomplished mother was the sole teacher of her daughters, and even of the boys until they were pretty far advanced. In a letter to her son John, Mrs. Wesley thus explained her methods—

'None of them were taught to read till five years old, except Kezzy, in whose case I was overruled ; and she was more years in learning than any of the rest had been months. The way of teaching was this : the day before a child began to learn, the house was set in order, every one's work appointed them, and a charge given that none should come into the room from nine till twelve, or from two till five, which were our school hours. One day was allowed the child wherein to learn its letters ; and each of them did in that time know all its letters, great and small, except Molly and Nancy, who were a day and a half before they knew them perfectly, for which I then thought them very dull ; but the reason I thought them so was, because the rest learned them so readily, and your brother Samuel, who was the first child I ever taught, learnt the alphabet in a few hours. He was five years old on the 10th of February ; the next day he began to learn, and as soon as he knew the letters began at the first chapter of Genesis. He was taught to spell the first verse, then to read it over and over till he could read it off-hand without any hesitation ; and so on to the second, etc., till he took two verses

for a lesson, which he quickly did. Easter fell low that year, and by Whitsuntide he could read a chapter very well; for he read continually, and had such a prodigious memory, that I cannot remember ever to have told him the same word twice.'

As it was with Samuel so was it with John, for the same method was observed with all of the children. When they knew their letters, they began to spell and to read, but they were required to read one line or verse perfectly before they passed on to a second. A proportion of six hours out of the twenty-four was not considered too much to be devoted to school; and the singing of a psalm commenced and ended the work of each day. Discipline was always well maintained; and from their earliest years the little ones were taught that to cry for a thing was the sure way not to get it. Only three meals a day were allowed, and there was never any eating and drinking between meals. Eight o'clock was bed-time; and though the rectory at Epworth was subject to noises at night, which were believed by the family to be supernatural, no servant was allowed to sit by a bed till a child fell asleep. Amid such surroundings, which he ever thought on with gladness till his last days, John Wesley appeared to be a lad thoughtful and studious beyond his age. When offered anything such as a child would like, he would hesitate, and reply with cautious reserve, as though he were afraid of committing himself too far. He so early showed gifts in argument that his father once said, 'I think our Jack would not attend to the most pressing necessities of nature unless he could give a reason

for it.' The great events of his childhood were his having the small-pox, which his mother said he bore bravely, 'like a man, and indeed like a Christian ;' and the destruction of the Epworth Rectory by fire, when through a special Providence, as it seemed, the inmates escaped a terrible death.

The fire at the rectory occurred in 1709, or just before John Wesley was six years old. The only charitable way of looking at such a catastrophe is to suppose that it happened by pure accident ; but it seems to be a question whether the house was not set on fire, while the family were in their beds, by vindictive parishioners. According to Henry Moore, who knew him well, that was the opinion of John Wesley himself, and he gave an anecdote showing how strained was the relationship between the rector and his people at certain times : ' Many of his father's parishioners gave him much trouble about the tithes. At one time they would pay only in kind. Going into a field, upon one of those occasions, Mr. Wesley found a farmer very deliberately at work with a pair of shears, cutting off the ears of corn and putting them into a bag which he had brought with him for that purpose. Mr. Wesley did not say anything to him, but took him by the arm and walked with him into the town. When they got into the market-place, Mr. Wesley seized the bag, and, turning it inside out before all the people, told them what the farmer had been doing. He then left him with his pilfered spoils, to the judgment of his neighbours, and walked quietly home.'

Whether the fire was accidental or the diabolical

work of criminal parishioners, it happened just before midnight on Wednesday, February 9. According to the graphic description of Mrs. Wesley herself, 'it was discovered by some sparks falling from the roof upon a bed, where one of the children (Hetty) lay, and burning her feet. She immediately ran to our chamber and called us ; but I believe no one heard her ; for Mr. Wesley was alarmed by a cry of FIRE in the street, upon which he rose, little imagining that his own house was on fire ; but on opening his door, he found it was full of smoke, and that the roof was already burnt through. He immediately came to my room (as I was very ill, he lay in a separate room from me), and bid me and my two eldest daughters rise quickly and shift for our lives, the house being all on fire. Then he ran and burst open the nursery-door, and called to the maid to bring out the children. The two little ones lay in the bed with her ; the three others in another bed. She snatched up the youngest, and bid the rest follow, which they did, except Jacky.'

Thus, before he was six years old John Wesley was providentially saved from death by fire. When Mr. and Mrs. Wesley reached the ground floor the flames roared around them, the roof was about to fall in, and they thought they were lost. At last they got out without injury ; but John, the second son of the family, was not with them, and some one thought that they heard him cry for help. In after years John himself retained very vivid memories of what really happened. 'Seeing the room was very light, I called to the maid to take me up,' he said. 'But none answering, I put my head out of the curtains, and saw streaks of fire

on the top of the room. I got up and ran to the door, but could get no further, all the floor beyond it being in a blaze. I then climbed upon a chest which stood near the window: one in the yard saw me, and proposed running to fetch a ladder. Another answered, "There will not be time; but I have thought of another expedient. Here I will fix myself against the wall; lift a light man and set him on my shoulders." They did it, and he took me out of the window. Just then the roof fell: but it fell inward, or we had all been crushed at once.'

Notwithstanding the loss of his house and goods, that was probably one of the happiest moments in Samuel Wesley's life; for when he saw that his son was rescued, he cried, 'Come, neighbours, let us kneel down, let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children: let the house go, I am rich enough.' John Wesley himself ever remembered that deliverance with gratitude, and on several occasions publicly referred to it.

As regards scholarship, Mrs. Wesley was probably not inferior to her husband, and she was moved by an earnest desire to advance the Kingdom of God. For the greater part of her life she was accustomed to devote an hour in the morning and another hour in the evening to her private devotions. After his preservation from the fire, she looked upon her son John with more than ordinary interest and tenderness, praying for him with even greater earnestness, as though she realized that the Lord had some special work for him to do in the world.

At that time the morals of the common people

of Epworth were at a very low ebb ; and according to some authorities, certain of the profligate people had twice attempted to set the rectory on fire before they actually succeeded the third time. Mrs. Wesley felt great solicitude for the perishing people ; but there were of course many of a better sort who valued their religious privileges and longed for the best things.

As the neighbouring parish of Wroote was held by Samuel Wesley with that of Epworth, there was service in the latter place on Sunday morning only. At times the rector would be away from home for a considerable time ; he would attend the sittings of Convocation at Westminster ; and on one occasion he is even said to have absented himself from home for some months through differing from his wife on political matters, Mr. Wesley being in sympathy with King William, his wife leaning more towards the Stuarts. In seeking to benefit the parishioners, however, Mrs. Wesley left politics out of the reckoning ; but a Sunday evening meeting, which she began in 1712, while her husband was in London, created some uneasiness in the mind of the latter, and he wrote a letter of gentle admonition, for fear what was done by a woman on behalf of the Church might be considered out of order, as a curate of the parish led him to think might actually be the case. The enthusiasm of Mrs. Wesley had been fired by the then much talked about example of certain Danish missionaries, and in a letter to her husband she explained how the meeting had originated and how it had grown.

‘I thought it my duty to spend some part of the

day in reading to, and instructing my family ; especially in your absence, when having no afternoon service, we have so much leisure for such exercises ; and such time I esteemed spent in a way more acceptable to God than if I had retired to my own private devotions. This was the beginning of my present practice ; other people's coming in and joining with us was purely accidental. Our lad told his parents ; they first desired to be admitted ; then others who heard of it begged leave also ; so our company increased to about thirty, and seldom exceeded forty last winter.'

The curate and some others objected, and biassed the rector's mind ; but when he saw the attendance at church increased, a better feeling promoted throughout the parish, and young persons who hitherto had wasted their Sunday hours in the streets attracted to hear a good sermon read, he saw that Mrs. Wesley was doing right.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOL-DAYS AT THE UNIVERSITY AND ORDINATION

BEFORE he was eleven years of age, or in 1714, the year of the death of Queen Anne and of the accession of George I., John Wesley was placed at the Charterhouse School, through the influence of the Duke of Buckingham, the head-master, an eminent scholar in his day, being Dr. Walker. During the five years that John was at this school he laid the basis of a superior education, and the high privilege accorded him was never undervalued. Some hardships had to be borne; but it seems to be possible, or even probable, that these may have been exaggerated. He enjoyed excellent health and made admirable progress, which, apart from a miracle, could hardly have been the case had the maintenance of his bodily vigour depended on his running three times round the grounds every morning, and getting a small portion of dry bread each day for his ordinary diet. According to Henry Moore, 'Discipline was so exceedingly relaxed, that the boys of the higher forms were suffered to eat up, not only their own portions of animal food, but those also which were allotted to the lesser boys.' It is hard

to believe, that throughout all his after-life Wesley would have regarded the Charterhouse with so much interest and affection if his experience had been literally as here depicted. At all events, his brother Samuel, who was nearly eleven years older than John, sent to Epworth encouraging accounts of the Charterhouse scholar's general progress. When the rector was hesitating about what he should do with his youngest son, Samuel wrote to his father: 'My brother Jack, I can faithfully assure you, gives you no manner of discouragement from breeding your third son a scholar.' Then, on another occasion he wrote, 'Jack is with me, and a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can.'

The earlier part of the time that John Wesley was at the Charterhouse, was characterized by great political agitation, and by the rising for the Pretender, James Edward Stuart, who claimed the English Crown as 'James III.' The annals of the time show that the crisis was a very dangerous one; and though he may not have been old enough to have been a politician, our young Charterhouse scholar would be aware that his mother secretly sympathized with the Jacobites, who were seeking to restore the Stuarts; and he would naturally hear of the violent scenes which took place in London and in the provinces. In various directions the riots and outrages showed that the House of Hanover, which had just come into the most splendid inheritance, had many enemies. Fierce cries against the foreign king resounded through the London streets, and the late William III. was burnt in effigy at Smithfield. Nonconformist

chapels were destroyed by the mob, which in many instances was encouraged by magistrates and country gentlemen ; and if Louis XIV., the French king, had not died just at that crisis, war would probably have once more broken out between England and France.

But, though this passing storm may have made itself heard at the Charterhouse, Wesley's studies were not interrupted, and he turned his opportunities to good account. According to Moore, 'Wesley's natural temper in his youth was gay and sprightly, with a turn for wit and humour.' He was likewise fired by some ambition—a desire to be somebody, and to do something—not an unwholesome sign in a boy, if wisely directed. Though he always harboured an affection for the place, Wesley, in after-years, regretted part of his conduct at the Charterhouse ; that is to say, when outward restraint was removed he became negligent of outward duties, while he did things which he knew to be wrong, though 'they were not scandalous in the eyes of the world.' Religious duty was not suspended, but he became more formal. 'I still read the Scriptures and said my prayers morning and evening,' he says. 'And what I now hoped to be saved by was, (1) Not being so bad as other people ; (2) Having still a kindness ; and (3) Reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.' During his school-days, John often walked to the West-end of the town to visit his brother Samuel, who was chief usher at Westminster School, and for some time Samuel had his youngest brother Charles under his tuition.

At the age of seventeen, or in 1720, a year noted in history as being that of the great commercial crash, otherwise the bursting of the South Sea Bubble, Wesley was elected to Christ Church, Oxford, his health at the time not being very robust, a chief trouble being bleeding at the nose. He tells his mother that, on one occasion, while out in the country, he was well-nigh choked by the haemorrhage, and could get no relief till he hurriedly took off his clothes and dived into a river. During his early days at Oxford, Wesley is depicted as 'the very sensible and acute collegian—a young fellow of the finest classical taste, of the most liberal and manly sentiments.' Moore adds that, 'His perfect knowledge of the classics gave a smooth polish to his wit, and an air of superior elegance to all his compositions.' Like others of his class he amused himself by composing brilliant trifles; but as the income of forty pounds a year, which he had as a Charterhouse scholar, was too straitened for his needs, he was unable to keep out of debt, or to avoid borrowing. In his estimable mother the poor student always had a friend to sympathize with him, however. 'Be not discouraged; do your duty; keep close to your studies, and hope for better days,' she wrote at a time when needing encouragement herself. Small-pox was very prevalent and fatal at Epworth in the summer of 1724, and as Mrs. Wesley was the only one in the household who had not had the disease, there was naturally some anxiety. Then the daily round of Oxford life was varied by news of Samuel Wesley having broken his leg at Westminster, and John had to write a word of

condolence. ‘You have more reason to thank God that you did not break both, than to repine because you have broke one leg,’ he said. ‘You have undoubtedly heard of the Dutch seaman, who having broke one of his legs by a fall from the mainmast, instead of condoling himself, thanked God that he had not broke his neck.’

Wesley’s letters to his mother during his student life at Oxford are alive with interest, they afford glimpses into the life of the University city, and refer to passing events. Thus, he mentions Jack Sheppard’s wonderful escape from Newgate; then shows that he had been reading Dr. Cheyne’s once famous *Book of Health and Long Life*, in which the chief prescriptions were temperance and exercise; and next refers to ‘an unlucky cut across my thumb which almost jointed it.’ Here is something about the advantages and disadvantages of Oxford life written in the fall of 1724, and first published in the *Wesleyan Times* in 1866:—

‘We are now most of us very healthy at Oxford, which may be in some measure owing to the frosty weather we have had lately. Fruit is so very cheap that apples may be had almost for fetching; and other things are both plentiful and good. We have, indeed, something bad as well as good, for a great many rogues are about the town, insomuch that it is exceedingly unsafe to be out late at night. A gentleman of my acquaintance, standing at the door of a coffee-house about seven in the evening, had no sooner turned about, but his cap and wig were snatched off his head, and though he followed the thief at a great

distance, he was unable to recover them. I am pretty safe from such gentlemen, for unless they carried me away, carcass and all, they would have but a poor purchase.'

Wigs of the best make were then as costly as gold watches are now, and thus constantly tempted light-fingered thieves, though penalty for the crime on conviction would have been death. As regarded Dr. Cheyne, Wesley in the main adopted his system of temperance in eating and drinking, and to such a method of living he ascribed his health and long life.

It was a most providential circumstance that such a man as Wesley, destined for a great and far-reaching life work, should find the means for the superior education he enjoyed while his father was burdened with what were to him heavy debts. When he was only twenty-two, or in 1725, his parents favoured his taking holy orders, and he accordingly gave great attention to divinity, more particularly to the works of Thomas à Kempis, Jeremy Taylor, and William Law, the latter for a time tending to confirm him in the legalism to which at the outset he was somewhat prone. Whether or not Wesley had an eye to the Church when he went to Oxford is unknown ; but up to the age of twenty-two he had a pleasant, careless life, though now saw that if he was going to preach the Gospel he must do so with some sort of seriousness. Outside of his own family he never until now had a religious friend, but one now met with had the effect of turning the current of his life. Wesley sketched out quite a new and strict programme. 'I

began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set out in earnest upon a new life,' he says; 'I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and to pray for, inward holiness. So that now, doing so much, and living so good a life, I doubted not that I was a good Christian.'

While Wesley was aiming at such pharisaic attainments, and while his parents were doing their best to settle points in divinity, his sister Emilia, writing from Wroote, advised him: 'Never engage your affections before your worldly affairs are in such a posture that you may marry soon.' In adding that 'the contrary practice has proved very pernicious in our family,' Emilia may have referred to her father's affairs, which were commonly in confusion through debts being contracted which could hardly ever be paid, so that if John needed to ask help of his father, the favour might as well be asked at one time as another. 'I know you are a young man encompassed with difficulties, and have passed through many difficulties already, and probably must through many more before you are easy in the world,' added Emilia; 'but, believe me, if ever you come to suffer the torment of a hopeless love, all other afflictions will seem small in comparison of this.' The picture of the state of the family affairs at home then given shows that old Samuel Wesley was not remarkable for his thrift.

'I know not when we had so good a year, both at Wroote and at Epworth, as this year,' writes Emilia; but instead of saving anything to clothe my sister

or myself, we are just where we were. A noble crop has almost all gone, besides Epworth living, to pay some part of those infinite debts my father has run into, which are so many, that were he to save £50 a year, he would not be clear in the world this seven years. One thing I warn you of: let not my giving you this account be any hindrance to your affairs. If you want assistance in any case, my father is as able to give it now as any time these last ten years; nor shall we ever be the poorer for it.'

While such was the condition of things at home, prosperity seemed to smile upon these young Wesleys. Samuel, the eldest, was doing well at Westminster; for John to go to Christ Church, Oxford, with a Charterhouse scholarship, eventually to be elected a Fellow of Lincoln College, looked like the opening of a brilliant career; and Charles had his school-bills paid by an unseen patron in Ireland, who offered to make him his heir.

In after years John Wesley spoke of his brother's declining to go to Ireland as a fair escape, and from his standpoint such it really was. As Southey remarks, however: 'The fact is more remarkable than he was aware of; for the person who inherited the property intended for Charles Wesley, and who took the name of Wesley or Wellesley in consequence, was the first Earl of Mornington, grandfather of the late Marquis Wellesley and the great Duke of Wellington. Had Charles made a different choice, there might have been no Methodists, the British Empire in India might still have been menaced from Seringapatam, and the undisputed tyrant of Europe

might . . . have insulted and endangered us on our own shores.'

In 1725, at the age of twenty-two, John Wesley was ordained deacon by Potter, Bishop of Oxford, who, as the son of a Yorkshire tradesman, was a scholar who looked with favour on the early Methodists. The bishop's advice was that a Christian teacher should not spend time 'in contending for or against things of a disputable nature, but in testifying against notorious vice, and in promoting real essential holiness.' After John Wesley commenced preaching he pursued his studies with extraordinary diligence, allotting certain days in the week to separate subjects; but soon he had to confess that life was too short to allow of one arriving at universal knowledge, and to argue with his mother that there were some things which it was hardly worth while taking the trouble to learn. His election to a Fellowship at Lincoln College in March, 1726, and the removal of Charles to Christ Church, were steps forward for both of them; but the letters which came from their father showed how desperate were the family affairs. The ill-health of both the father and mother at Epworth, in addition to the burden of debt which oppressed them, made the outlook gloomy indeed.

Meanwhile, Wesley might have accepted the mastership of an endowed school in Yorkshire, but he was gradually developing into the hard-working clergyman. It was remarkable that, at the early age of twenty-three, he should have been elected Greek lecturer and moderator of the classes of his college. The summer of 1726 was passed at Epworth and

Wroote, where he assisted his father in parish work. Wroote was a small place surrounded by Lincolnshire bogs, and having ague as one of its endemic ailments, while, according to Mehetabel Wesley, the rustics who came to church had heads 'as impervious as stones.' Wesley did some good work there, however, and found no cause to murmur. He returned to Oxford at the latter end of September ; but in the summer of 1727 he removed to his father's parishes, where for two years or more he served as curate, or until November, 1729. Some weeks were spent at Oxford in 1728, where, on September 22, Dr. Potter ordained Wesley priest. He was now a fully equipped clergyman, who gave great attention to his duties, worked hard at his general studies, avoided unprofitable companions, and strove hard to live a strictly religious life. More light was wanted before this brilliant young scholar could become the great preacher of the Evangelical Revival, however. In reference to this time, Wesley himself said in after-years, 'I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labour. Indeed, it could not be that I should ; for I neither laid the foundation of repentance nor of believing the Gospel, taking it for granted that all to whom I preached were believers, and that many of them needed no repentance.' In accordance with the rules of his college, when Wesley had taken his M.A. degree, his time in general was more at his own disposal.

CHAPTER III

‘THE HOLY CLUB’

So far the three brothers of the Wesley family had lived to encourage one another in that zealous profession of religion which seeks to excel in good works, and to advance by human merit to that state of grace and acceptance with God which can alone come from the merits of Christ. John Wesley himself appears at times to have suspected that something was wrong, as he did not enjoy the assurance and peace for which he craved ; but without knowing it, he was on his way towards the light.

When Wesley returned to Oxford in 1729, he found that his brother Charles had become the founder of a small society, the members of which aimed at living a strictly religious life, while they sought to do all the good which lay in their power. They met for pious conversation, reading, and prayer, took the communion every Sunday, and visited the poor, as well as criminals in the gaol, while a large proportion of what they had was given in charity. Their abstemious living and rigorous fasting tended to weaken their constitutions.

Mistaken as these young men might be in some

of their views and practices, the fact that a small company in such a town as Oxford should not only separate themselves from the world, and make a bold stand against the unbelief and licentiousness of the times, was at once striking and reassuring. One writer mentions that just about the time that Wesley was setting out in the world, Voltaire was expelled from France on account of his opinions—opinions as dangerous to the state as they were opposed to the peace and prosperity of the individual. It was certainly remarkable that while the infidel Frenchman was venturing the prophecy that in a short time Christianity would pass away, a coterie of so-called enthusiasts at Oxford should have included the three great men who were soon to become the leading evangelists of the Revival.

Without doubt the good providence of God was working to bring good out of evil ; but at the same time the age seemed to be retrogressive, and to have more evil omens than rays of promise. The eighteenth century generally has been pictured as the golden age, or the time when people could live in more quiet and comfort than has been possible either before or since. But though there may have been less competition and a smaller population to provide for, the early part of the reign of George II. was a period of moral deadness and of spiritual darkness. Such aged persons as remembered the golden promises of Puritanism, and even of the Revolution, must have felt their hearts sink in despair. Many a pulpit whence had gone forth pure Gospel teaching now gave forth cold morality or heartless rationalism.

Evangelical preachers were, indeed, few and far between, although, of course, such were to be found if one only knew where to find them. Though some who were before their time were founding charity schools, education was hardly considered to be a thing which concerned the common people. The universities were resorted to by the young and the dissipated, and many worldly-wise parents even desired to see their children conform to the reigning order of things, and to avoid being 'righteous overmuch.'

To understand how singular was the phenomenon which 'The Holy Club' presented to ordinary persons of the world in the reign of George II., we must understand something of the more general characteristics of the times as the Wesleys and their associates knew them. Defoe, Swift, Young, Gay, Pope, Addison, Steele, and Thomson were some of the favourite authors. As Henry Moore says, 'The great body of the clergy neither knew nor cared about systems of any kind, and in a vast number of instances they were immoral—often grossly so. The populace in the large towns were ignorant and profligate; the inhabitants of villages added to ignorance and profligacy brutish and barbarous manners. A more striking instance of the rapid decay of religious light and influence in a country scarcely occurs than in ours from the Restoration till the rise of Methodism. It affected not only the Church, but the Dissenting sects in no ordinary degree.' A more recent writer characterizes the time from the opening of the reign of Anne to that of George II. as 'a dewless night

succeeded by a sunless dawn. There was no freshness in the past, and no promise in the future. The Puritans were buried, and the Methodists were not born. . . . The reign of buffoonery was past, but the reign of faith and earnestness had not commenced. As regarded Sunday, the Bishop of Lichfield declared from the pulpit that it had become the 'devil's market-day.'

Heavy drinking caused an incredible number of diseases and deaths. The vices of the upper classes were in keeping with the degradation of those beneath them; for among the lower classes ignorance, dishonesty, and superstition prevailed to a degree one can have little idea of. The people in general were allowed to go their own way, and one can hardly wonder that it was a downward one.

Some time before Wesley's return to Oxford the Vice-Chancellor issued an edict against 'wicked and blasphemous notions contrary to the truth of the Christian religion,' when it was shown that it was necessary to guard young persons 'against these wicked advocates for pretended human reason against Divine revelation.' There were some who had so little faith in the religion which gave them a livelihood, however, that they disapproved of such a notice being issued, among these being the Dean of Christchurch, where Charles Wesley was now employed as tutor. In other words, it is supposed that the dean was more inclined towards unbelief than he was towards the Gospel, so that it was not a little remarkable that under such conditions the younger son of the rector of Epworth should have been the first to gather

around him those Oxford Methodists who made up 'The Holy Club.' When John Wesley himself gave up his Epworth curacy to return to Oxford in November, 1729, he did so at the earnest call of Dr Morley, who was then Rector of Lincoln College, a man to whom old Samuel Wesley felt that nothing was to be denied, on account of the service Morley had rendered in getting John elected to the Fellowship. John's chief business was now the work of a tutor, but he was at once attracted by the meetings of the serious young men of which his brother was the originator, but of which the elder brother now became the acknowledged leader. John's learning and natural abilities gave a character to the movement it may not have previously possessed; but, as Southey remarks, 'No talents, and, it may be added no virtues, can protect the possessor from the ridicule of fools and profligates.' One acute young collegian remembered that in ancient Roman times there were physicians who held that nearly all human ailments could be cured 'by a specific *method* of diet and exercise,' so that Charles Wesley and his coterie were called *Methodists*. The name seemed to be new, but in point of fact it had been used in England during the Puritan period. When the old people at Epworth heard of what was going on they were well pleased, for nothing could have been more in accordance with their wishes. 'I hear my son John has the honour of being styled the father of the Holy Club,' said the old rector; 'if it be so, I am sure I must be the grandfather of it; and I need not say that I had rather any of my sons should be so

dignified and distinguished than to have the title of His Holiness.’ A London newspaper gave out that there was a society at Oxford, ‘Sons of Sorrow,’ who, to carry out the principles of Christianity, had abandoned themselves ‘to absurd and perpetual melancholy.’ The members of ‘The Holy Club’ were also compared to the Jewish Essenes and to the Continental Pietists. At the same time they were grossly libelled by being represented as hypocrites who made religion a cloak for indulging in vice.

Some who were members of ‘The Holy Club’ lived to fill foremost positions in the Christian world ; but we catch passing glimpses of others who are less known and who recede to be lost sight of for ever. The first of the brotherhood to pass into the unseen state was *W. Morgan*, who at first was regarded as a victim of austerities prescribed by Wesley ; but his disease was as little understood as the nature of his religion. Then there was his brother *Charles*, who was afterwards attracted. *Robert Kirkham*, one of the early friends of the Wesleys, came to see that the best things did not consist in good living and an easy life ; and finding that there was no half-way-house for the accommodation of religious loiterers he entirely separated himself from the world to live as an ascetic. His sister *Elizabeth* at one time attracted the notice of Wesley, until it seemed probable that she might become his wife. *John Clayton* was more severely formal, or he showed a more pharisaic spirit. In after years he seems to have become more self-righteous or sacerdotal, and would never soil his

ecclesiastical linen by associating in work with those who proclaimed the Gospel to the poor in barns and cottages, on commons and village-greens. As a Jacobite, he took part in the Young Pretender's attempt to regain the British Crown for 'James III.' in 1745. *Benjamin Ingham* was a man of another mould, and one who ultimately seceded to the Moravians, and this partially separated him from early associates. *John Gambold* also went over to the Moravians, but, after many extravagances, he died in faith and hope, in 1771. These men were self-denying if they were self-righteous. If heaven could be purchased, we should necessarily have to be self-denying ; and it would certainly be worth some toil and suffering, as well as fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, if Paradise could be attained by such means. It is even possible that people who thus go about the business of saving themselves with the steady determination of heroism, may feel contentment akin to those who give a large price for a good thing. The prayers and exhortations of these Oxford Methodists were heard in prisons, hospitals, and cottages ; but while debtors, felons, and poor peasants may have been taught to read the Bible, they needed to learn themselves the grand Scripture truth that the just shall live by faith. They had set up an ideal standard of righteousness to attain to which they would have given anything ; but all their prayers, fastings, and bodily rigours did not bring them the peace they craved. We must not, however, cast stones at men who were honest and earnest according to their light, but who through misreading Scripture failed to teach

the Gospel in its fulness. They are praiseworthy because, in a licentious age, they witnessed for the need of religion and testified against the sins of the times.

But there were others who attended 'The Holy Club' who were destined to exercise a very far-reaching influence. One of these was *James Hervey*, the future author of the *Meditations among the Tombs*, and other works which attained wide popularity. At Oxford he ranked among the chief of those who worked to save themselves; but at length he read Scripture to see that salvation is by faith alone. It is easy for us to object to the shallowness of his matter and the tinsel character of his style; but his literary faults are probably somewhat exaggerated. At all events, he was appreciated by those for whom he wrote, and he taught the Gospel in its fulness.

A still greater figure is that of *George Whitefield*, son of a widow who kept an inn at Gloucester. Born in 1714, he became a servitor at Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1732, and soon attracted the notice of Charles Wesley, through whom Whitefield was enabled to join the Society, now about fifteen in number, which assembled six evenings in the week for about three hours, at first for more general improvement, but at last religion became almost the sole business to receive attention. The object was to *recover the image of God* in each individual soul. The scheme of conduct drawn up shows that they had the spirit of earnestness and self-sacrifice, but that their views were sacramental rather than evangelical;

and in after years Wesley frankly confessed that at this time he was in a state of spiritual ignorance.

If possible, Whitefield excelled his comrades in the severity of his daily habits. 'I began to leave off eating fruits and such-like, and gave the money I usually spent in that way to the poor,' he says. 'Afterwards I always chose the worst sort of food, though my place furnished me with variety. I fasted twice a week. My apparel was mean. I thought it unbecoming a penitent to have his hair powdered. I wore woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes, therefore looked upon myself as very humble.'

The result was that Whitefield's constitution became so weakened that he could scarcely get upstairs, and a physician had to prescribe for him. He was on the way to something better, however; for he arrived at clear, Scriptural views of the Gospel at or about Whitsuntide, 1735, or something like three years before the brothers Wesley reached a similar condition of light and freedom. For years before he reached that state the elder of the two brothers realized that everything was not quite as it should be, but he still went forward, doing his best according to his light.

The old Rector of Epworth was apparently better pleased with the 'The Holy Club' than some of its promoters were with themselves. The old man, who died in 1735, did not live to see the opening of that great evangelical crusade we call the Revival; but he was as proud as a father could be of his two sons who were the life and soul of the movement, so that his sentiments were of a somewhat sacramentarian order. Mr. Tyerman goes so far as to say of this

Oxford movement, when its leader was thirty years of age: 'Wesley seriously contemplated the formation of a society, who should strictly observe saint days, holidays, and Saturdays, besides other ritualistic practices, down to superstitious admixture of sacramental wine with water.' It would even appear that confession was also recommended; for Emilia Wesley wrote to her brother to say, 'All such desires in you, or any other ecclesiastic, seems to me like Church tyranny, and assuming to yourselves a dominion over your fellow-creatures which was never designed you by God.'

From time to time Wesley made excursions into various parts of the country, now visiting his parents at Epworth, or calling at Manchester to see his friend Clayton, who had carried to that town the principles of the Oxford Methodists. The fatigue of these journeys of the itinerant preacher, his low diet and frequent fastings, brought on the spitting of blood from which he had formerly suffered, but, by amending his practice, he recovered. It was also about this time that the practice of reading while travelling on horseback was commenced, to be continued for nearly forty years, or until he was obliged to take to a carriage on account of the infirmities of age.

Meanwhile, the dying Rector of Epworth desired that his son John should succeed him in that living. Personally, John had no desire to be tied to the Lincolnshire parish, but, to meet his father's wishes, he might probably have accepted the living if such as Walpole, the Prime Minister, Bolingbroke,

and Gibson, Bishop of London, who between them seem to have had the next presentation under their control, had not eyed him with too little favour to allow of their doing Wesley a good turn.

CHAPTER IV

WESLEY IN AMERICA—THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH

THE visit of Wesley to the great Trans-atlantic colony of Georgia in 1735 looks like a new era in his life. His father died in April, not having survived to see the printing of his work on *Job*, which had occupied much of the time of five and twenty years. The manuscript was burned when the Epworth rabble set the Rectory on fire, but he repaired the loss, in order that his fame might rest on this one great work, which now, however, is utterly neglected.

While 'The Holy Club' was carrying on its work and discipline at Oxford, James Edward Oglethorpe, son of a Surrey gentleman, and member of the House of Commons, obtained a parliamentary committee to inquire into the condition of prisons and prisoners in England, the result being that numbers of small debtors were released. It was on behalf of such that Oglethorpe organized a private company, which founded the Colony of Georgia on the Atlantic seaboard of North America. Named after George II., the king granted a charter in June, 1732, Oglethorpe,

Dr. Burton, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and others, having the territory handed over to them 'in trust for the poor.' The enterprise was regarded with so much interest in England that the Bank of England and the House of Commons each voted £10,000, so that when the founder went out with the first batch of 120 emigrants, the prospect was promising. The town of Savannah was founded, a friendly agreement with the Indians was entered into, presents were made to them; and before long the English settlers were joined by a number of persecuted Protestants from Salzburg in Germany, who were directed to the American haven by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. After a few months, Oglethorpe returned to England, bringing with him some native Indians, the sight of whom brightened the interest of the king and his people in the colony, the population of which was soon increased by a number of Scots from the Highlands, and by successive companies of Moravians.

When Wesley was asked by Oglethorpe and Dr. Burton to remove to that far-away land, he hesitated, but, encouraged, by his mother, sister, and others, he decided to go, though he was himself still in need of fuller Gospel light. 'My chief motive is the hope of saving my own soul,' he wrote. 'I hope to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen.' His brother Charles also determined to go as secretary to Oglethorpe, but went out as a fully ordained clergyman. The brothers left London in October, having for companions on the ship one or two old Oxford friends and a number of

Moravians. The rigorous and laborious life commenced at the University was continued on the sea. The Christian zeal, even, accommodating temper of the Moravians, and their general freedom from fear in all kinds of weather and in other dangers, made a deep impression on Wesley's mind.

On landing, Wesley settled at Savannah and his brother Charles at Frederica ; but space will not allow of details of their adventures being given at length. The persecution to which Charles was subjected, led to his returning to England after a few months. Mr. Quincy, the first chaplain, having also left, Wesley considered the whole colony to be his parish. He reckoned there were about seven hundred settlers, but his chief desire was to preach to the Indians. One of his parishioners at Frederica said that he did not know what to make of Wesley's religion, and that no one in the town paid any attention to what he said. Meanwhile, Wesley was able to read and expound to German settlers in their own tongue, and he set about learning Spanish, in order to be able to converse with the Jews.

It was in Georgia that Wesley fell in love with Sophia Hopkey, an elegant and sprightly young girl who had put herself under him as an instructor, and who had attended him night and day in sickness. The appearances were that they would marry, but the affair took another turn, and Sophia married a man named Williamson, a poor creature indeed when compared with Wesley. 'God commanded me to pull out my right eye, and by His grace I determined to do so,' he wrote, in reference to this

marriage; 'but being slack in the execution, on Saturday, March 12, God being very merciful to me, my friend performed what I could not.' No doubt all was wisely ordered; for Sophia was probably not what her lover supposed. As an old man, nearly fifty years later, the great preacher of the Methodist Revival wrote: 'I remember when I read these words in the church at Savannah, "Son of man, behold I take from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke," I was pierced through as with a sword, and could not utter a word more. But our comfort is, that He who made the heart can heal the heart.'

It is vain to ask what results would have followed had Wesley married Sophia Hopkey. He would probably have remained in Georgia, and thus have missed taking a leading part in the Revival in England. If Wesley had remained in America, no one can tell what would have been his influence on the Indians, and on society in general on that continent. As it was, the ecclesiastical discipline to which he subjected Mrs. Williamson after her marriage resulted in his having to leave the country. He was not in his proper sphere; he was, as it were, driven back to England to undertake his life work.

When he left Georgia in December, 1737, Wesley was no doubt in a saved state, but he wanted more light before he could be an effective evangelical teacher. He was not at ease; something seemed to be wanting. 'I went to America to convert the Indians, but oh, who shall convert me?' he asked himself on the homeward journey; and he was soon to have an answer to that momentous question.

During Wesley's absence from England, Whitefield had attained to that fulness of religious freedom which was necessary to his becoming the great field-preacher of the Revival. It was reported that at one of his first services he had driven fifteen persons mad ; but Bishop Benson, to whom a complaint was made, hoped that the madness was of a kind which would continue. The effect produced by his discourses at Bristol and in London was too amazing for description, but accounts of him and his work began to appear in the newspapers. When Wesley arrived in England at the end of January, 1738, Whitefield was leaving for a four months' visit to Georgia.

A few weeks after his return to England, both Wesley and his brother Charles attained to that state of full gospel liberty which Whitefield had already for some time enjoyed, and which never left them till they laid down the arms of their warfare. The chief human instrument in bringing about this change was Peter Boehler, a Moravian, who gave John and Charles Wesley that sound Scriptural teaching which was destined to bear abundant fruit in after days. Boehler's references to the subject, in a letter written at the time, vividly portray the brothers in their transition state :—

‘ The elder, John, is a good-natured man ; he knew he did not properly believe on the Saviour, and was willing to be taught. His brother . . . is at present very much distressed in his mind, but does not know how he shall begin to be acquainted with the Saviour. Our mode of believing in the Saviour is so easy to

Englishmen, that they cannot reconcile themselves to it ; if it were a little more artful, they would much sooner find their way into it. Of faith in Jesus they have no other idea than the generality of people have. They justify themselves ; and therefore they always take it for granted that they believe already, and try to prove their faith by their works, and thus so plague and torment themselves that they are at heart very miserable.'

The brothers ever after considered this to be the date of their conversion, and at once began to give a clear and unmistakable testimony. John Wesley's famous sermon at St. Mary's, Oxford, on 'By grace are ye saved, through faith,' was quite an event of the times ; and it was also a triumphant note which he continued to strike during the fifty-three years which followed.

It is singular that when he came into the light of evangelical truth, Wesley should have taken his great friend, William Law, to task for having failed to teach him in what the Scriptural doctrine really consisted. 'For two years, more especially, I have been preaching after the model of your two practical treatises,' he said ; 'and all that heard have allowed that the law is great, wonderful, and holy. But no sooner did they attempt to fulfil it, but they found that it is too high for man, and that by doing "the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified."'

What Wesley further confessed to the man whom he had regarded as a veritable apostle, may also be quoted for the sake of those who may be making similar mistakes :—

'Under this heavy yoke I might have groaned till death, had not a holy man, to whom God lately directed me, upon my complaining thereof, answered at once, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, and nothing shall be impossible to thee. This faith, indeed, as well as the salvation it brings, is the free gift of God. But seek, and thou shalt find. Strip thyself naked of thy own works, and thy own righteousness, and fly to Him, For whosoever cometh unto Him, He will in nowise cast out."

The change which had come over John and Charles Wesley—that is to say, their conversion, as they would have emphatically called it—not only greatly astonished their friends, it was incomprehensible to many of them.

'I heartily pray God to stop the progress of this lunacy,' wrote their brother Samuel, who was then master of Tiverton School. Samuel also wrote to Charles, and then he asked John for an explanation of his unintelligible assertion that he had just become a Christian. 'By a Christian, I mean one who so believes in Christ as that sin hath no more dominion over him ; and in this obvious sense of the word, I was not a Christian till the 24th of May last past,' was the reply. 'Till then sin had dominion over me, although I fought with it continually ; but from that time to this, it hath not. Such is the free grace of God in Christ. If you ask me by what means I am made free? I answer, by faith in Christ ; by such a sort or degree of faith as I had not till that day.'

Whatever friends or relatives might think or say,

this was decisive, though we may bear in mind that Wesley had not yet attained to that state of full spiritual health which he afterwards enjoyed. Some sacramentarian prejudices were still retained, while some other notions, borrowed from the Moravians, whom he now visited at Herrnhuth, seem to have been more enthusiastic than Scriptural.

CHAPTER V

BEGINNING OF THE GREAT REVIVAL

ALTHOUGH he had not yet laid aside every weight which hampered him, Wesley now entered upon what was destined to be the great work of his life with the ardour of one who felt that he was endowed with a new nature. The Revival, in which he and Whitefield were to become the chief actors, had practically already opened with the awakening preaching of the latter before he embarked for Georgia ; but Wesley now took up the work where the great pioneer evangelist had, for the time, laid it down. After he had given his testimony at Oxford, Wesley preached when and where he had opportunity, showing preference for parish churches, as was naturally to be expected. The doctrines of repentance, and of justification by faith alone, were so distasteful to many, however, that having heard them once they did not want to hear them again. Wesley thus found that in every direction churches were closed against him ; but now, obstacles thrown in his way had the effect of stimulating him to greater earnestness. If the way was not opened in one direction, he

sought it in another. When their conduct was called in question, John and Charles Wesley called upon the Bishop of London to vindicate their teaching, and were well received. They were not mere preachers, however; for every opportunity of benefiting individuals was eagerly seized. The prisoners in Newgate, including malefactors condemned to the gallows, received spiritual attention with striking results.

We are not to suppose that the Wesleys and Whitefield originated the Revival; for that the great movement was of divine origin seems to be plainly proved by the fact that its more striking phenomena were not confined to one country nor to one continent. The awakening occurred at a number of centres, widely separated, at or about the same time, and just when vice and unbelief had become so rampant as to endanger the peace and well-being of the State. The population of the metropolis was less than three-quarters of a million; but while it was given over to pleasure, fashion, and extravagance, London was also morally and spiritually so far dead that the lowest depth of degradation seemed to have been reached. The higher classes encouraged the lower to grovel in vicious courses until religion seemed to be universally neglected, while drunkenness and licentiousness were too common to attract notice. Then, as it were, the Spirit of God breathed upon the dark wastes and the valley of dry bones, and immediately light and life began to appear. The awakening in Germany was as full of promise as a second Reformation. In New England, Jonathan Edwards, born in the same year as Wesley, was reviving the evangelical

doctrines with the most striking and far-reaching effects. In the Principality, Howel Harris was a means of reviving religion in seven counties ; he formed a number of societies, and in face of persistent persecution earned the right to be called the Apostle of Wales. In Scotland, in and about Kilsyth and Cambuslang, similar results were achieved by James Robe's earnest preaching, a great outpouring of God's Holy Spirit being very manifest.

Such was the general outlook when great things were about to be achieved in England. Whitefield had already done much, and Wesley was being led by a way that he knew not to follow in that great evangelist's steps. After his return from Georgia, Whitefield took to his loved employment of preaching. In the early part of 1739 he preached a number of sermons in and about London, and then set off to the west ; and it was through being warned by the Chancellor of Bristol that he must not preach in the diocese without a licence that an open-air service was conducted at Kingswood for the benefit of the colliers. This field-preaching was such a startling innovation at that time that Whitefield was one of the select few who would have ventured upon it, but having commenced, there was nothing to do but to go boldly forward, especially when the success of the practice was of a kind which no one could have expected. There were two hundred working people at the first service ; there were two thousand at the second ; four thousand at the third ; and ten thousand at the fourth. Similar crowds were attracted at Bath, Cardiff, and other places. Wesley wrote to Whitefield

from Oxford, and the evangelist replied by urging his friend to proceed to Bristol at once to carry on the great work. Though his brother and some others were hardly willing for him to go, Wesley responded to the call, reaching Bristol on the last day of March. Two days later Whitefield went on his way, and in the afternoon of that very day, on 'a little eminence' outside of Bristol, Wesley followed his friend's example by preaching in the open air from the prophet's striking words, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,' etc. (Isa. lxi. 1, 2). Such was Wesley's love of order that he says of this time, 'I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields.' The very next letter he received from Whitefield opened in a way which must have been reassuring, however: 'Yesterday I began to play the madman in Gloucestershire by preaching on a table in Thornbury-street.' In the main the remainder of 1739 was spent in and about Bristol, and though during that time he gave some five hundred sermons, those he preached in churches could be counted on the fingers. The work did not go forward without violent opposition or persecution, however, the rabble being encouraged by those above them. 'Not only all manner of evil was spoken of us, both in public and private, but the breasts of the people were stirred up almost in all places to knock these mad dogs on the head at once,' says Wesley, who adds that, 'when complaint was made of their savage, brutal conduct, no magistrate would do us justice.'

It is to this period that the adventure with Beau Nash properly belongs, an adventurer who ranked as

'King of Bath,' and whose biography was written by Oliver Goldsmith. The Bath, as the picturesque western city was then called, was the chief resort of the aristocracy and of fashionable grandes, and by universal consent Nash was recognized as Master of the Ceremonies. The son of a Welsh manufacturer his wild character in youth brought about his expulsion from the University of Oxford ; but when encountered by Wesley he had reigned as 'King of Bath' without a rival for more than a third of a century. By going about in a coach drawn by six horses with outriders and heralds, Nash assumed the state of a local monarch, and not liking Wesley's visit in the capacity of an evangelist, the head of the gambling and dancing fraternity resolved to appear on the ground, and if possible to stop the service. On this becoming known the congregation was larger than it would otherwise have been, including some of the fashionable visitors.

When he came up to the spot where the evangelist had taken his stand, Nash, seated in his imperial-looking chariot, asked Wesley how he dared to act as he was then doing. The preacher showed that he was a fully ordained clergyman of the Established Church. 'But this is a conventicle, and contrary to Act of Parliament,' objected the Beau. 'No, conventicles are seditious meetings, but here is no sedition ; therefore it is not contrary to Act of Parliament,' was the preacher's reply. 'I say it is,' said Nash, who went on to show that such services frightened people out of their wits. 'Sir, did you ever hear me preach ?' asked Wesley, who on having an answer in

the negative, asked again, 'How, then, can you judge of what you never heard?' 'I judge by common report,' said the Beau. 'Common report is not enough,' Wesley added, who, when the intruder admitted that his name was Nash, quickly retorted, 'Sir, I dare not judge of *you* by common report.' At last the 'King of Bath,' seeing that he was getting the worst of it, went off, and Wesley never encountered him again.

Meanwhile, the work went forward in a wonderful way, and not only were large numbers converted, the Word was frequently attended by what were called 'outward signs.' Thus, on July 7, 1739, Wesley wrote, 'I had an opportunity to talk with Mr. Whitefield of those outward signs which had so often accompanied the inward work of God. I found his objections were chiefly grounded on gross misrepresentations of matters of fact. But the next day he had an opportunity of informing himself better; for (in the application of his sermon to invite all sinners to believe in Christ) four persons sank down close to him, almost in the same moment. One of them lay without either sense or motion. A second trembled exceedingly. The third had strong convulsions all over his body, but made no noise, unless by groans. The fourth, equally convulsed, called upon God with strong cries and tears. From this time, I trust, we shall all suffer God to carry on His own work in the way that pleaseth Him.'

These mysterious occurrences belong for the most part to the early days of the Revival, and Bristol, during Wesley's months of labour there in the year

1739, was the place where they were chiefly observed. The preachers' way of looking at the matter was consistent with common sense, while the way in which such writers as Isaac Taylor and Southey attempt to account for them is beside the mark altogether. The subject is a solemn and mysterious one, but want of space will preclude the striking details being given.

Thus, through the grace of God, Wesley was master of the situation, though his uncommon fervour or earnestness was put down to enthusiasm. The mysterious phenomena just referred to were also urged against him by interested objectors; but happy in his work, Wesley was full of earnestness. A change also came over Mrs. Wesley similar to that which had taken place in his own heart, so that the great evangelist had the joy of having his mother on his side, agreeing with all that he did. Wesley's elder brother, Samuel, now in the closing days of his life, expressed 'exceeding concern and grief' at the turn things had taken. 'Is it not enough that I am bereft of both my brothers, but must my mother follow too?' he wrote. 'They are already forbid all the pulpits in London; and to preach in that diocese is actual schism,' he added. 'In all likelihood it will come to the same all over England, if the bishops have courage enough. They leave off the liturgy in the fields; though Mr. Whitefield expresses his admiration for it, he never once read it to his tatterdemalions on a common.' In less than a month after giving these mistaken views, Samuel Wesley passed away in full assurance of his own interest in Christ.

Meanwhile, the evangelical movement developed in a way which was no less striking than encouraging, and which could not have been foreseen. Charles Wesley, who at first was disposed to be more conservative than others, was himself soon found in the open air, preaching to vast congregations on Kennington Common or at Moorfields. But though the crowds attracted were such as no building would accommodate, the need of buildings naturally became pressing. Whitefield's school at Kingswood and the meeting-place at Horsefair, Bristol, were first erected, and quite unexpectedly Wesley found himself responsible for the cost, and this led to his vesting with trustees his own chapels during his lifetime.

The Evangelical Revival soon became a great movement in itself, and, disowned by the main body of the clergy, and separated from his former friends, the Moravians, whose meeting was in Fetter Lane, Wesley and his followers realized the need of having suitable headquarters in London. Accordingly, soon after his return from Bristol in November, 1739, he writes, 'I preached at eight to five or six thousand, on the spirit of bondage and the spirit of adoption ; and at five in the evening to seven or eight thousand in the place which had been the King's Foundery for cannon.' In consequence of a disastrous accident which occurred early in the reign of George I., this rambling old place—the precursor of the present Wesley's Chapel—had been an untenanted ruin for about twenty years. The accommodation included the large meeting-room, apartments for Wesley and others, in which his mother died, a school, and a

book-room, coachhouse, stable, yard, and a pleasant walled garden. The cost of the entire establishment was only about £800. The regular Sunday services attracted great crowds, as did the meeting at five o'clock a.m. ; the class meetings were held there, and a school was established, of whom the well-known Silas Told became the first teacher. Told left some valuable reminiscences of life in those times, and among these is a reference to a five o'clock in the morning service at the Foundery in June, 1740: 'When we entered the place, I was tempted to gaze about me, and, finding it a ruinous place, I began to think it answered the report given of it. . . . Exactly at five a whisper was conveyed through the congregation, "Here he comes." I was filled with curiosity to see his person, which, when I beheld, I much despised. . . . His text was, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you." . . . Under this sermon God sealed the truth to my heart.' In the early part of 1740 the ruinous old place was restored, and there John and Charles Wesley and others preached the Gospel during forty years. The early custom was for men and women to sit apart. Then, as Wesley says, 'None were suffered to call any place their own ; but the first comers sat down first. They had no pews ; and all the benches for rich and poor were of the same construction.' The building, with its pantile roof and pulpit of rough boards, was uncouth both within and without ; but the effect of its services extended to the ends of the country. Thus early we find Howel Harris coming up from Wales to visit the Foundery, and there

kneeling in prayer with Wesley and John Cennick, the first lay-preacher of Methodism.

The work at Bristol went forward, the new room being a centre of attraction, although converted colliers and others became subjects of persecution. During the terribly severe winter of 1739-40, when hundreds were thrown out of work by the frost, Wesley set an example by making collections to feed the hungry. There was a riot at Kingswood on account of the high price of bread, but that was allayed by Charles Wesley selecting a number of converts, all singing as they marched to the new room to hold a prayer-meeting. Some time later the meeting-house was surrounded by a howling vindictive mob which had been set against Wesley by false reports.

At the same time much anxiety was felt on account of the work consequent on the disputes with, and separation from, the Moravians, who seem to have considered themselves the chief agents of the Revival. Wesley had been one of the original members of the society at Fetter Lane, founded May 1, 1738 ; he had for some time attended their meetings, and had shown great interest in the society. The disputes concerning doctrines to be believed now ran high, however, and Wesley took a bold stand by preaching against the prevailing errors, such as 'Weak faith is no faith,' and , that there is only one commandment in the New Testament, namely "To believe,"' etc. These discourses were followed by others on Christian faith and practice, exposing the manifest errors to which the Moravians had yielded. The commotion increased, but the separation was complete.

Other disputes followed, including those relating to doctrines which led to the separation between Wesley and Whitefield, so that the year becomes like a line of division, parting those who had hitherto worked together in unison.

In 1740, the first watch-night meeting was held. The man who first proposed that such a meeting should be held was one James Rogers, a collier of Kingswood. He was converted under the ministry of Charles Wesley, and he had enjoyed some local renown as a violinist, but when the change occurred he forthwith placed his violin on the fire, and told his wife that he was going to be a Methodist. Tyerman says that this was one of the most eventful years in Wesley's life—'There was a full and final separation from the Moravians; there was the separate organization of the Methodist Society at Moorfields; and there was the controversy with Whitefield.'

CHAPTER VI

SOME OF WESLEY'S HELPERS

SILAS TOLD was one of the oldest of Wesley's helpers, and he is said to have been 'a man of good understanding, although not much indebted to education.' A native of Bristol, and born in 1711, Told himself tells us that his family was well-to-do in the world, but that they practically lost their property through a dishonest housekeeper, who gained possession of deeds and papers to destroy them when she found that she was unable to turn them to her own account. Told's father was a physician at Bristol, who might have done well; but being 'a great schemer,' or, as we should now say, *speculator*, he came to grief, and died at sea on a vessel on which he had served as surgeon. Being but slenderly provided for, and having several brothers and sisters, Silas was admitted to Colston's school, where he was well treated. While living near Kingswood, near Bristol, he made a companion of a sister named Dulcybella, and he gives this characteristic anecdote of their early adventures:—

'Once, when we were very young, we wandered

into Kingswood, and lost ourselves in the woods, and were in the utmost consternation lest we should be devoured by the wild beasts ; but quickly the kind providence of God permitted a large dog to come behind us ; although no house was within a mile, yet the dog drove us clear out of the wood to a place we knew, and never barked at us ! And when we now looked round to behold the dog, he was not to be seen. Being heedless, we wandered again into the woods, and were a second time bewildered, and in greater perplexity than before, when, on a sudden, looking around, we beheld the same dog making towards us, and he came directly upon us ; and we, being much terrified, ran from him, until we got a second time into our knowledge ; nor did he leave us till we were driven by him where we could not run into any more labyrinths. I then turned about to look for the dog, but saw no more of him, although we were upon an open common. Surely this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'

At the age of fourteen, Silas was apprenticed to the sea, and went through a good deal of suffering. He particularly mentions a destructive hurricane, followed by a plague of sickness, which afflicted Jamaica ; and the young sailor himself was in a condition very similar to that of Job when he lay down to die, as he thought, on a dunghill at Kingston. He gives a number of striking particulars of adventures on sea and land during his sailor life, especially of his once being wrecked on an inhabited island without a shred of clothing to cover him. At the

age of twenty-five he gave up the sea, married, and settled in London.

He now wished to lead a regular life ; but through observing that people who went to church differed in no good sense from those who stayed away, he concluded that 'religion was a mere farce.' He then got the appointment of schoolmaster at Staplefort Tawney, Essex, the stipend being £14 a year, with whatever he could make extra from day-scholars. 'I soon raised a considerable school, and sent to London for my wife and all my goods,' he says. The founder of this charity, Lady Luther, befriended him in other ways, for he adds : 'The lady invited me three days in the week, with the curate of the parish, to dine with her ; and every other day, if I thought proper, to accompany the servants at their dinner in Knaves' Hall, as they termed it.' He was charmed with the advantages of his new situation as contrasted with the hardships of the sea. His chief companion was the curate of the church—a too common representative character of curates in those days before the coming on of the Great Revival.

'The curate of the parish frequently called upon me, decoyed me to his lodgings, about three miles from the school, to join him in smoking and drinking. He also pressed me to sing him a sea-song ; and I was generally detained so very late at night that I could scarcely find my way home. Once, as the curate and myself were going from Lady Luther's over the fields to my school, I took the liberty to quote some passages of Scripture, relating to our immoral proceedings. My guide laughed heartily,

and said, "Told, are you so great a blockhead as to believe the Scripture? It is nothing but a pack of poor stuff." This surprised me much, and from that time I separated myself from his company; and God, in His providence, disunited me from those dead Christians.'

He left the school through some disagreement about gathering wood for fuel, and returned to London and worked as a clerk, chiefly to a bricklayer in the city. It was while in this situation that he first came in direct contact with one of the early Methodists.

'A young man, who was a bricklayer, came and asked me if I could help him to business. I answered him roughly, which he received with great meekness. This struck me with surprise. I then called him back, and desired him to wait on a certain master-bricklayer the next evening, who, I believed, could find him employment. He went accordingly, and the gentleman admitted him into his service. This young man was a happy instrument of leading me out of darkness into God's marvellous light.'

Silas Told did not at this time like the Methodists, and he sometimes 'cursed and swore' at his young friend just mentioned for being one; but he was prevailed upon to attend one of Wesley's services at the Foundery, and though his wife was at first much opposed to him, he became a changed character.

We learn from Silas Told's narrative that as a married man he once had no more than ten shillings a week to live upon. He married in 1737, but seven years later he was left a widower with one daughter.

His circumstances then improved, and he procured a situation at Wapping, where his services were greatly valued, so that, as he tells us, when it was proposed by Mr. Wesley that he should accept the post of schoolmaster at the Foundery, there was grief on both sides, for he had not been more than a few months at Wapping.

The day after, I was established at the Foundery School, and in the space of a few weeks collected three score boys and six girls,' he says; 'but the society, being poor, could not grant me more than ten shillings per week. This, however, was sufficient for me, as they boarded and clothed my daughter. Having the children under my care from five in the morning till five in the evening, both winter and summer, sparing no pains, with the assistance of an usher and four monitors, I brought near forty of them into writing and arithmetic. I continued in the school seven years and three months, and discharged two hundred and seventy-five boys, most of whom were fit for any trade.'

It would now be thought to be a hard discipline for boys and girls to have to be at a five o'clock in the morning service, but these hardy youngsters seemed to thrive in school, and prosper afterwards. It was after hearing Wesley preach at one of these services, some references being made to prison visitation, that a new scene opened in Silas Told's life.

He resolved that he would visit the prisoners in Newgate, and it happened that there were then ten malefactors in the prison under sentence of death, and Lancaster, the chief of these, who with seven others

was executed seven days after, became a wonderful example of converting grace. Thus, at the time of his execution, 'he exhorted the populace to forsake their sins, pressed them to come to the throne of grace immediately, assuring them that they would find God gracious and merciful to forgive them, as He had forgiven him.'

Told remarks: 'This was the first time of my visiting the malefactors at Newgate, and of my attending them to the place of execution ; and it was not without much shame, because I perceived the greater part of the populace considered me as one of the sufferers.' We learn how 'the surgeons' mob' hung about the gallows at Tyburn to seize the bodies, if possible, for dissection ! Lancaster's body was so seized ; but a party of sailors followed to Paddington, and having gained possession of it, carried it through Islington to Shoreditch, until, too weary to go further, they laid the body on a doorstep, and went their way. Without themselves being aware of the fact, they laid the corpse on the threshold of the house of Lancaster's mother !

Told preached to the felons and debtors in Newgate until there was a society of thirty-six members, while he also visited about all the towns in the present twelve miles' radius. For a time, while thus working for others, he was under a cloud himself, until one day he seemed to see a kind of heavenly vision, and the trouble was lifted from his mind.

The work in Newgate could only be carried on in face of much opposition from the officials, and also from the prisoners themselves. 'The Ordinary

constantly, on Sunday morning, stationed himself a few doors from Newgate, for the space of two hours and more, to obstruct my entrance,' he says, 'forbidding all the turnkeys to give me admittance; yet the God of all compassion frequently made an entrance for me, so that I had an opportunity of preaching every Sunday morning on the debtors' side, to the number of forty prisoners, who behaved with much seriousness and attention.'

Newgate was then a dreadful centre of infection, the so-called gaol-fever being typhus of a most deadly kind; but Silas Told was above all fear. 'During the space of time between the several executions,' he says, 'I frequently preached and exhorted among the felons and debtors in Newgate, and constantly visited the sick in all parts of the prison; which I have reason to believe was blessed, in a great measure, to many of their souls; as numbers were prepared to receive the glad tidings of salvation when under sentence of death.'

The atrocities or judicial murders that were committed in the name of justice were a disgrace to the nation. The hanging of Dr. Dodd, though his crime hurt nobody and caused nobody any loss or hardship, was yet legal, and happened about two years before Told died; but the condemnation to death of four gentlemen of high position for a mere drunken freak after a dinner at Chelmsford, showed how crimes could still be committed in the name of law. Three out of the four were actually hanged, and the fourth, named Morgan, was respited through the earnest importunity with the king of the young woman of high social station

to whom he was engaged to be married. Many other characters Told met with in Newgate were more or less remarkable, either personally or in connection with the circumstances of their crimes, real or imaginary. One man, who was hanged for cheating his creditors, had £5000 in bank notes in his possession in Newgate! A more atrocious case of hanging an innocent woman was that of Mary Edmonson, charged with the murder of her aunt, but who was clearly quite innocent of the crime. Equally shocking was the case of a man named Anderson, who, driven to desperation by hunger, and having a wife and family to whom he was tenderly attached, asked two women in Hoxton-fields for money, and they, after giving him sixpence between them, accused him of robbery, and he was hanged. Told and his wife afterwards befriended this man's widow. He also attended many others whose cases were more or less striking, including the notorious Mrs. Brownrigg, in 1767, who murdered her apprentice girl. All of Told's labours at Newgate and elsewhere showed what an indefatigable Christian worker an early Methodist could become. He died in 1779, in the sixty-eighth year of his age.

The Journal of the Yorkshire stonemason, John Nelson, does not contain so many curiosities of the times as that of Silas Told; but in Nelson we see a man of great physical strength, who out of working hours preached the Gospel with a devotion not to be surpassed.

In early life he had strange thoughts and frightful dreams, and though he wished to be right he could

not see things as the Bible showed them. After hearing Whitefield preach in Moorfields, he said to himself, 'If things be so, I am no more a Christian than the devil.' He was more taken with Wesley than Whitefield, however, but passed through a time of trial and sifting before he found rest and peace.

Nelson was no doubt a man with a good deal of the animal in him, one who before his conversion went to lengths in gross sins which invariably leave a sting behind. His devotion to the cause when he became a travelling preacher was very striking, and his adventures would form the groundwork of a very good romance. His adventures were frequently of a perilous kind. He would at one time have to confront a drunken mob led by a clergyman ; at times he would be benighted in the wilder parts of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, finding it difficult to get a lodgings, and once he was followed for a long distance by a mad dog. He was also opposed by Nonconformists as well as the Church ; but he went straight forward, 'hewing stone in the daytime and preaching every night.'

It was through the clergyman at Adwalton that he was pressed for a soldier and went through much ill-usage, all because he preached what his persecutors called 'a new religion.' He was ever cheered by his wife's strong faith, and by the sympathy of his own people. When in charge of the military officers he declared he would never fight, and reproved them for using bad language. He was at length discharged by order of Lord Stair, through the influence of friends in London, on July 29, 1744. Wesley was

so well satisfied with Nelson's bearing under trial that he sent him word, God 'had work for you to do which you knew not of, and thus His counsel was to be fulfilled.'

Great apprehension was felt when the Young Pretender landed in 1745 with a view of gaining the crown for his father, both father and son being as worthless as their predecessors of the preceding century who actually reigned. When the danger had passed, Nelson reports: 'At almost every place where I came to preach mobs were raised, as if they determined to kill me and all God's children, in a kind of thanksgiving, because the rebels were conquered.' He lived to see the cause triumphant, however, and during the twenty years ending with 1770 he laboured as a regular preacher in the northern and western counties. He died at the age of sixty-seven, in 1774, and his wife, who was two years older, survived him only a few weeks.

The son of a farmer, Christopher Hopper was a native of Ryton, Durham, and was born on Christmas Day, 1722. He was soon left fatherless; but he had the advantage of some Christian teaching in his youth, as it was then that the great preachers of the Revival set out on their great enterprise. Some of his reminiscences at this time afford us a glimpse of what the evangelical preaching was, and also of the way in which it was received by the people at large.

'In May, 1742, we heard a strange story about a Church clergyman, that had been at Newcastle-

upon-Tyne, and had preached in Sandgate to many thousands, who had heard him with astonishment. This new thing made a huge noise. The populace entertained various conjectures about him ; but few, if any, could tell the motive on which he came, or the end he had in view. He made a short blaze, soon disappeared, and left us in a great consternation.

Some time after, his brother Charles came, and preached at Tanfield Cross. I ran with the multitude to hear this strange preacher : when I saw a man in a clergyman's habit, preaching at a public cross to a large auditory, some gaping, some laughing, and some weeping, I wondered what this could mean. When he had concluded, some said, "He is a good man, and is sent to reform our land ;" others said, "Nay, he is come to pervert and deceive us, and we ought to stone him out of our coasts." I said, "If he is a good man, good will be done, and it is plain we want a reformation ; but if he is an impostor, he can only leave us as he found us, that is, without hope and without God in the world." I cannot tell what induced me to go so far ; but I found I was in danger of being called a Methodist, and was glad to dismiss the conversation with a smile and a piece of drollery.'

Though he wished to reform and lead what he called a good life, Hopper thought it would be more prudent to oppose 'the new way' as the evangelical teaching of the New Testament was called, so utterly dead to comprehend the Scripture, had even the ordinary Christian teachers become. A soliloquy of Hopper's sufficiently explained the ordinary 'way,' which even many serious persons accepted as being

alone consistent with common sense. 'I will read my Bible, say my prayers, go to my parish church, reform my life, and be good and pious, without the scandal of the Cross.'

The great change soon came, however, and Hopper became one of Wesley's first local preachers. 'In the year 1744, I taught a school at Barlow in the parish of Ryton,' he tells us. 'My time was employed six days in teaching the children under my care the branches of learning I proposed, and the first principles of Christianity. I spent every Sabbath and all my vacant hours in preaching, reading, praying, visiting the sick, and conversing with all that Providence put in my way. God was with me, and blessed my weak labours. Sinners were converted, believers multiplied, and my soul rejoiced in God my Saviour.'

There were three persons to whom the convert's work was objectionable—'Satan, the Rector of Ryton, and his curate,'—and these headed an opposition which gave 'first hard words, and then hard blows.' He was summoned into the spiritual court at Durham for teaching a school without a licence, and for other irregularities. That trouble soon blew over, however, such actions always being risky, because George II. had once declared that he would not have any such persecution in his kingdom. A favourite plan then was to press the preachers for service in the army. They came at last to think that there was no law for them in England; but that was a mistake. The grievance lay not in law, but in law-breaking parsons and magistrates who encouraged the mobs, and who

in some instances, when they found themselves in the court of King's Bench, paid dear for their treason to their office and the Gospel. While preaching around Newcastle and elsewhere, Hopper was at times in great danger ; sometimes being wounded with the missiles of the mob. So ardent was he in the work that he gave up his school in order the more untrammelled to carry on his work of a preacher, thus risking his chances of livelihood. At times he would rise above earthly cares ; at other times he was much depressed at the prospect of increasing poverty and hardship. 'I well remember,' he says, 'once on the top of a cold mountain in a violent storm of snow, when the congealed flakes covered me with a white mantle, Satan assaulted me, and pushed me hard to return to my school, or some other business to procure bread. I staggered through unbelief, and almost yielded to the tempter. But as the attack was sudden, so the battle was soon over. The Lord sent these words to my heart like lightning, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked *ye* anything ? and they said, Nothing." I answered with a loud voice, "Nothing, Lord ! Nothing, Lord !" All my doubts and fears vanished in a moment ; and I went on my way rejoicing.'

In 1750 he visited Wales and Ireland in company with Wesley, who had now become so accustomed to little accidents on the road that he appears to have thought little of them. On this occasion his mare went down more than once, 'and threw him over her head ; but without any hurt to man or beast.' A greater trial was the profane company on the vessel

between Holyhead and Ireland. Thus, one Griffith, 'a clumsy, hard-faced man, saluted us with a volley of ribaldry, obscenity, and blasphemy ; but God stopped his mouth, and he was confounded.' Their adventures in Ireland also revealed the kind of men who were doing the work. Once Hopper and some others landed from a fishing-boat twenty miles from Cork—a wild shore offering no signs of a lodging until in quite an extraordinary manner a farmer of the district invited them to his house.

His wife died of a fever in 1755, and soon after a fever brought Hopper himself to the brink of the grave ; but he recovered. In 1759 he married a second time, when he found himself in 'a pleasant situation,' with 'all things to make life easy and comfortable.' Now occurred 'a fair opportunity to step into the world.' But the preacher was not suffered to do that ; for he had work in hand which would bring 'far more gain in the end than all the shops in Newcastle.'

The record of Hopper's adventures in preaching would have read like a romance. The preachers, including Wesley himself, were stout believers in the retributions of Providence overtaking their persecutors. Hopper tells of something that happened at Durham in the spring or early summer of 1761, while he was preaching in a field to a large congregation. 'A gentleman, so called, employed a base man to strip himself naked, swim through the river to disturb the hearers ; but a good woman soon hissed him off the stage, so he was glad to return by the way he came, with much disgrace. Mr. John Greenwood informed

me afterwards that the very gentleman who encouraged the poor wretch above mentioned was some time after found drowned in the same river. One of the last things which 'mistaken Churchmen' were able to do at Manchester was to bring out the fire-engine; but all such opposition soon ended in failure.

Hopper was born on Christmas Day, 1722, but after the alteration in the style he was wont to keep his birthday on January 5. While he was preaching a funeral sermon for John Wesley, in March, 1791, a false alarm, similar to that which led to the disastrous panic in the Surrey Music Hall during Spurgeon's first service there, led to a great panic. “The gallery is coming down!” This dreadful cry struck the whole congregation with a panic; all was in confusion. The people came downstairs one over another. Some came over the gallery, others through the windows.’

Eleven years after his great leader, almost to a day, on March 5, 1802, this itinerant preacher also entered into rest.

Thomas Mitchell was another of the band, who was born in 1726, and in his earlier days he was greatly indebted to the preaching of Grimshaw. When Mitchell thought to volunteer as a preacher, he called upon the vicar, when the latter said, 'If you are sent of God to preach the Gospel, all hell will be up in arms against you. Prepare for the battle, and stand fast in the good ways of God. Indeed, you must not expect to gain much of this world's goods by preaching the Gospel. What you get must come

through the devil's teeth ; and he will hold it as fast as he can. I count every covetous man to be one of the devil's teeth. And he will let nothing go, for God and His cause, but what is forced from him.'

There was no exaggeration in Grimshaw's way of stating the matter. Some of the worst of the riots which occurred in those days against the preachers were instigated by the squires, and were often led on by a clergyman or his curate. Thus, the curate of Guiseley once headed a mob, when, after being pelted with eggs, he was pulled down. When another preacher came, he was treated in a similar way, his clothes being torn off, so that lying on his naked back he could be dragged along the sharp gravel. 'It was my turn to go next,' says Mitchell. 'No sooner was I at the town than the mob came, like so many roaring lions. My friends advised me not to preach that night ; and undertook to carry me out of the town. But the mob followed me in a great rage, and stoned me for near two miles, so that it was several weeks before I got well of the bruises I then received.' His adventures were of the most varied kind. 'In one place I met with a mob of women, who put me into a pond of water, which took me nearly over my head,' he says ; 'but by the blessing of God I got out safe, and walked about three miles in my wet clothes ; but I catched no cold.' All this time he found encouragement in 'the example and advice of good Mr. Grimshaw.'

In some instances, the defenders of the preachers showed that they were not to be trifled with, and law-breakers learned that discretion was the better part

of valour. Hence, says Mitchell, 'As I was preaching in a certain village in the Fen, the mob came into the house, and broke through the congregation, in order to pull me down; but the good woman of the house took me into the parlour, and stood in the door with a great kitchen poker in her hand, and told the mob, the first man who came near the door, she would knock him down.'

The frequent extreme poverty of the travelling preachers was not their least striking characteristic. Thus, at Berwick-on-Tweed, he encountered a poor woman carrying a child on her way into Scotland. 'The woman of the house asked her to come in, and gave her some tea. She seemed to be very poor, and wanted help. But as I had only ninepence, and had thirty miles to ride the next day, I thought I could not spare her anything; but after she had got the child again on her back, and was setting off, my heart pitied her, so I gave her sixpence out of my little stock, and had threepence left. But I trusted in God's providence, and knew that He would provide for me. After preaching the next morning, a poor soldier put two shillings into my hand. So God rewarded me fourfold.'

He sometimes accompanied Wesley on the road, and he was the first Methodist preacher to conduct a service at Rye, in Sussex. He was also the first to teach the preacher-hunters in those parts the true spirit of English law. After being badly used, he served several of the ringleaders with writs, which so struck terror into their hearts, that they gladly paid all charges. 'I found a thankful heart,' he says, 'for a

good king, good laws, and liberty of conscience.' Mitchell was not a man of any exceptional abilities, nor had he enjoyed any great educational advantages, but he was much respected as a man of courage and faith in the common cause. At the London Conference, the question as to who had died was asked year after year, and in 1785 the names included, 'Thomas Mitchell, an old soldier of Jesus Christ.'

Peter Jaco, born in Cornwall in 1729, and appointed to the Manchester Circuit in 1754, died in 1781, at the age of fifty-two. He had been the subject of serious impressions from his youth, and in time became one of the most enthusiastic of evangelists, who in the van of the Revival encountered hardship and danger for the work's sake. In reference to hardships and struggles, he says: 'In some places the work was to begin; and in most places, being in its infancy, we had hardly the necessaries of life; so that after preaching three or four times a day, and riding thirty or forty miles, I have often been thankful for a little clean straw, with a canvas sheet to lie on. Very frequently we had also violent oppositions. At Warrington, I was struck so violently with a brick on the breast, that the blood gushed out through my mouth, nose, and ears. At Grampound I was pressed for a soldier, kept under a strong guard for several days, without meat or drink, but what I was obliged to procure at a large expense; and threatened to have my feet tied under the horse's belly while I was carried eight miles before the commissioners; and though I was honourably acquitted by

them, yet it cost me a pretty large sum of money, as well as much trouble.'

Thus having

'Steadfast in all the storms of life remained,
And in the good old ship the haven gained,'

his remains lie among those of others of Wesley's preachers at Wesley's Chapel.

The most extended memoir of any of those who are ranked among Wesley's preachers is that of Thomas Walsh, who had not reached thirty years of age when he died in 1758. A native of Ireland, he preached to the natives in their own tongue, while he was also an excellent Hebrew and Greek scholar. He was a very earnest student of Scripture, and believed that young men who might live to be old would see some of the things foretold by the prophet Daniel. As a convert from Romanism, in which he had been reared, he spoke with great authority and power, as he went through the land almost like a flaming seraph.

CHAPTER VII

WORK AND PROGRESS, MOBS AND OUTRAGES—THE YOUNG PRE-TENDER

AT this early stage of the Revival it must have been evident to its most sanguine friends that the great movement would have its martyrs. The honour of being the proto-martyr is accorded to William Seward, who had accompanied Whitefield to Georgia, and who in 1741 was travelling with Howel Harris through Glamorganshire. At different places the preachers were pelted, and at Hay Seward received a blow on the head which caused his death. Rough and dangerous adventure was becoming a very commonplace thing, however. Thus, after preaching five times in and about Bristol and Bath on July 11, Charles Wesley says, 'Satan took it ill to be attacked in his headquarters—that Sodom of our land—Bath. He raged horribly in his children. They went out and came back again, and mocked, and at last roared, as if each man's name had been legion.' More trying even than such opposition were the differences respecting doctrine between such as Whitefield, Cennick, and others, and the Wesleys,

while the falling away and expulsion of some of the first members of the Society at Bristol showed how the gold might become dim. It was the separation of the evangelists into two distinct bodies that led to the erection of the Tabernacle at Moorfields for Whitefield's congregation. We are not to look upon the leaders in the Revival as opponents, however. 'Wesley and Whitefield henceforth were divided, and yet united,' says Tyerman. 'Each pursued his own different course; but their hearts were one. Their creeds were different, but not their aims.'

When Wesley and his brother stood more alone, the converts they were gathering around them became more completely organized. In Bristol the converts appear to have met in companies in different parts of the town for common edification, and that led to the establishment of classes and class-leaders. Then London followed in the wake of Bristol; for at the opening of 1742, Wesley had a following in London of some eleven hundred members. Thus, it was impossible for him to give them proper pastoral oversight, and assistance was indispensable. Then in proportion as the converts increased, other teachers and preachers were needed, and suitable men to take up the work seemed to be raised up at the right time. Hence we meet with Cennick and Humphreys, who afterwards became more disposed to follow Whitefield; Maxfield and Nelson, Westall and Richards, and others. When Maxfield, by his rare powers and unequalled ardour, gathered crowds around him, and numbered many converts, Wesley was at first disposed to stop the practice as irregular; but his mother

warned him that Maxwell was as surely called of God to the work as he was himself. Wesley yielded to the force of this reasoning, and came round to see that the preaching of such was no more irregular than his own services in the open air. It was about the same time that he defended his out-door services in a way that opponents must have found it difficult to answer. 'Are there not churches enough to preach in?—No, my friend, there are not, not for *us* to preach in. You forget, we are not suffered to preach there, else we should prefer them to any place whatever.—Well, there are ministers enough without you!—Ministers enough, and churches enough—for what? To reclaim all the sinners in the four seas? If there were, they would all be reclaimed. But they are not reclaimed. Therefore it is evident there are not churches enough. And one plain reason why, notwithstanding all these churches, they are no nearer being reclaimed, is this: they never come into a church, perhaps not once in a twelvemonth, perhaps not for many years together.'

The time had now come for Wesley to open up new fields of labour by extending his itinerancy. John Nelson, as a London convert, had returned to his native village of Birstall, and while attracted to that place, Wesley also decided that he would meet the wishes of Lady Huntingdon, who wished him to visit Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

At Birstall Nelson had many converts, and on reaching the place, on May 26, Wesley spoke to them. He preached at Birstall Hill, and on Dewsbury Moor, and some of the converts of these services were ever

after content to bear obloquy and persecution for the Gospel's sake. Some account of Nelson's own adventures has already been given. Southey says, he 'had as high a spirit, and as brave a heart, as ever Englishman was blessed with ;' but while he found many friends to rejoice in his abundant success as an evangelist, the extreme need of plain teaching was seen in the fact that people regarded the Gospel as a novelty. The common talk in some circles was about the so-called 'new faith ;' and plain-spoken men, such as Wesley, and those he enlisted in the service, were wanted to show that what was supposed to be new was really the old truths, which had become obscured or hidden—the ancient faith of the apostles and the primitive Church. All this was so strange that it seemed to be like a new revelation, and large numbers were sufficiently interested to come forward with some eagerness to have the matter explained—often by a preacher at his cottage door when work for the day was done.

Leaving Birstall, Wesley went on to Newcastle, where his message seemed to have the effect of producing a general awakening. He and his travelling companion, John Taylor, lodged at an inn, and when the two walked through the town in the daylight or the May evening they were shocked at the abounding wretchedness of the streets as seen in the general drunkenness and extreme profanity of old and young. They arrived on a Friday, and at 7 a.m. they took their stand by a pump in Sandgate, the poorest part of the town. 'Three or four people came to see what was the matter, who soon increased to four or five

hundred,' says Wesley, who, after singing Psalm c., preached from Isaiah liii., 'He was wounded for our transgression.' The crowd increased to between one and two thousand before the sermon was ended. As the people still stood 'gaping and staring' in that condition of surprise which still asks for explanations, Wesley said, 'If you wish to know who I am, my name is John Wesley,' adding that at five in the evening he hoped to preach there again.

In Moorfields and on Kennington Common Wesley had been able to muster a congregation of from ten to twenty thousand hearers; but his astonishment exceeded that of the people in the morning when he now set eyes on the largest congregation he had ever beheld. 'I knew it was not possible for the one-half to hear, although my voice was then strong and clear,' he says; 'and I stood so as to have them all in view, as they were ranged on the side of the hill.' The text enlarged on was Hos. xiv. 4: 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.' The impression made was of that striking kind which promised to be lasting. 'The poor people were ready to trample me under foot, out of pure love and kindness,' he says. And when at length he got back to his lodgings by a road different from that he came, several persons had arrived there before him whose desire was that their visitor should remain in Newcastle at least for a few days. The request could not be complied with on account of other engagements. Wesley travelled back to Birstall, holding services at Boroughbridge and Knaresborough on the way, some days following being given to Birstall and

its neighbourhood. After such a pleasant beginning at Newcastle, Wesley contracted a liking for the town, which grew with time. It was there that he erected an orphanage and one of his largest chapels.

Wesley then proceeded to his native Epworth, which he had not seen for many years. 'I went to an inn, in the middle of the town, not knowing whether there were any left in it now who would not be ashamed of my acquaintance.' He was encouraged by meeting with some he knew, however. He offered to preach or read prayers in the church ; but Romley, the curate, refused to allow such an enthusiast to assist. The people crowded into the church, expecting to hear the son of their late rector, and though they were disappointed, they found compensation when John Taylor stood in the churchyard and gave out that Mr. Wesley would preach there at six o'clock. 'Accordingly at six I came, and found such a congregation as, I believe, Epworth never saw before. I stood near the east end of the church, upon my father's tombstone, and cried, "*The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink : but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.*"' Day after day until the following Sunday the great evangelist was heard speaking from that same tombstone, and, referring to Saturday, June 12, he says, 'While I was speaking several dropped down as dead ; and among the rest such a cry was heard of sinners groaning for "the righteousness of faith" as almost drowned my voice.' The conversions were many, one being that of a gentleman 'who was remarkable for not pretending to be of any religion at all,' and who had not been in a

place of worship for over thirty years. 'Sir, are you a sinner?' called out Wesley, addressing him. 'Sinner enough!' was the reply. Wesley's belief was that he had been enabled to do more good by preaching on three days in Epworth churchyard than during three years in his father's pulpit in the church. He also preached in the surrounding parishes; and it is in connection with one of these that Wesley tells the anecdote of a whole waggon-load of converts being taken before a magistrate. What had they done? 'They pretended to be better than other people, and prayed from morning till night.' Another gave witness: 'They have converted my wife. Till she went among them she had such a tongue, and now she is as quiet as a lamb.' The magistrate approved of that conquest. 'Take them back—take them back,' he said, 'and let them convert all the scolds in the town.'

One of Wesley's auditors at Epworth was his brother-in-law John Whitelamb, the clergyman at Wroote, who for a lengthened period had lost his faith in Christianity. He had a great admiration for his distinguished relative, however, and wrote to him, and Wesley preached in his church. Early in the following year, his mother having passed away in the interval, Wesley again visited Epworth, and it was then that the curate refused to administer the sacrament to him because he was 'not fit' to receive it; but Wesley only thought such an adventure could not have befallen him in a more fitting place than the parish 'where, according to the strictest sect of our religion, I had so long lived a Pharisee.'

What struck him with remarkable force was the contrast between the full Gospel which he now preached, and the cold legality of his former teaching. Nearly forty years his father had laboured there without any great result, but now the harvest came.

The three chief centres of Wesley's labours were now London, Newcastle, and Bristol, many smaller societies existing in many other counties ; but as he had developed into an untiring itinerant, a large number of other towns enjoyed the benefit of his preaching as well as Cornwall. At Newcastle alone there were some eight hundred converts in addition to others in neighbouring places, and a chapel was built for their accommodation at a cost of £700. The Sunday school of a thousand children, afterwards gathered, was one of the first in England, and there a society existed for promoting the diffusion of the Scriptures before the British and Foreign Bible Society was thought of. Many hard-handed sons of toil who attended the evening service would sleep on the benches until Wesley appeared again in the pulpit at five o'clock in the morning !

For a man who put up such a house on his own responsibility, and had only a few shillings in hand for the contract, a chapel at £700 was a bold enterprise, though encouragement came in many remarkable ways. 'Friend Wesley, I had a dream concerning thee,' wrote one of the Society of Friends. 'I thought I saw thee surrounded with a large flock of sheep, which thou didst not know what to do with. My first thought after I awoke was, that it was thy flock at Newcastle, and that thou hadst no house of worship

for them. I have enclosed a note for one hundred pounds, which may help thee to provide a house.' The supplies afterwards received from time to time allowed of fatherless children being taken in, so that it came to be called the Orphan House.

The opposition or persecution to which the societies founded by Wesley were subjected now became very general, but it was more violent in some parts of the country than in others. In Bristol the magistrates checked the doings of rioters at the outset; but in London the anti-Methodist mobs had some license for a time, and besides subjecting the preachers and their followers to disgraceful outrage, even attempted to unroof the Foundery, though when the authorities showed themselves to be firm and determined, the evil was stopped. Sir John Gauson, chairman of the Middlesex Justices, who was supposed to have received his instructions from the king, told Wesley that on application justice should be done. Hence the rabble who supposed that there was no law for the Methodist preachers found out that they were mistaken. Unhappily, those who were supposed to be the guardians of order, the magistrates themselves, and even the clergy, encouraged disorder in many provincial towns; and in some instances Wesley may have had to regret that the indiscretions of his own preachers may have helped to turn the tide against them.

The year 1743 was remarkable for dreadful riots in Staffordshire, in which, at one time, Wesley himself seemed to be in imminent peril. In the early part of the year he preached twice in Wednesbury Town

Hall as well as in the open air, his brother Charles having visited the town some weeks previously. Wednesbury was then famous for barbarous sports, such as cock-fighting and bull-baiting, in which the half-savage miners and others delighted. There was one advantage, however; such people when once attracted were too hardy to be frightened away from the outdoor services by any kind of weather which the preacher himself was content to brave. Wind, sleet, or snow did not hinder Wesley from taking his stand if there was a congregation to address, and on one occasion at Newcastle we find him giving his message in a freezing wind until he was 'encased in ice.'

The success at Wednesbury was so great, that when Charles Wesley visited the town in May he found that the converts numbered three hundred. Egginton, the vicar, appeared to be much pleased; but when Wesley left, the indiscreet conduct of one of his preachers and others embittered the minds of many until they set their faces against the Revival. 'Mr. Egginton, the minister of Wednesbury, with several neighbouring justices of the peace, stirred up the basest of the people; on which such outrages followed as were a scandal to the Christian name,' says Moore. 'Riotous mobs were summoned together by the sound of a horn; men, women, and children were abused in the most shocking manner, being beaten, stoned, covered with mud. . . . Their houses were broken open by any that pleased, and their goods spoiled or carried away, some of the owners standing by, but not daring to oppose, as it would have been at the peril of their lives.'

Wesley's adventures at Wednesbury on October 20, show the violence of the outbreak. He preached at noon to a large congregation in the town ; but when writing in a friend's house in the afternoon, a roaring mob came up, which dispersed, however, after one or two of the ringleaders had been spoken to peaceably. A little later the mob returned in greater force, and crying for the preacher to be brought out ; but on being brought into Wesley's presence the ringleaders were pacified, as were also a large proportion of the rioters when they were spoken to, their cry being, 'The gentleman is an honest gentleman, and we will spill our blood in his defence.' When asked what they wanted, the answer was, 'to go with us to the justice,' the wish being that all should go at once.

'The night came before we had walked a mile, together with heavy rain,' says Wesley. 'However, on we went to Bentley Hall, two miles from Wednesbury. One or two ran before, to tell Mr. Lane they had brought Mr. Wesley before his worship. Mr. Lane replied, "What have I to do with Mr. Wesley ? Go and carry him back again." By this time the main body came up, and began knocking at the door. A servant told them Mr. Lane was in bed. His son followed and asked what was the matter. One replied, "Why, an't please you, they sing psalms all day ; nay, and make folks rise at five in the morning. And what would your worship advise us to do ?" "To go home," said Mr. Lane, "and be quiet."'

Instead of taking this advice it was decided to go on to the house of another justice at Walsall ; but

when that gentleman was reached at seven o'clock he was found to be in bed, and it was resolved to go back. 'We had not gone a hundred yards when the mob of Walsall came, pouring in like a flood, and bore down all before them,' says Wesley. 'The Darlaston mob made what defence they could; but they were weary, as well as out-numbered. So that in a short time, many being knocked down, the rest ran away, and left me in their hands.'

Taking Wesley with them the roaring mob came to the town, and when he attempted to enter a large house which had its door open, he was dragged back. He would next have entered a shop, but was not suffered to do so through fear that the house would be pulled down. Wesley stood in the doorway, and amid vindictive cries of 'Kill him!' 'Down with him!' and so on, attempted to speak, and did so until his voice failed. Then his voice came back and he prayed aloud; and just then the bully and prize-fighter with some others who had headed the mob suddenly turned, took Wesley in charge and declared that no one should harm him. A poor woman of Darlaston had been of the same mind, but after knocking down several men on her own account, the opposing force appeared to be too strong for her. Wesley got back to Wednesbury a few minutes before ten o'clock, having, as he says, 'lost only one flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands. I never saw such a chain of providences before,' he adds; 'so many convincing proofs that the hand of God is on every person and thing, overruling as it seemeth Him good.' It is to be noted that his

presence of mind was perfect throughout. He thought at one time that he might be thrown into the river; but even then his concern was more for the papers in his pocket than for himself, as he could readily have swam to the other side. When on the following morning he rode through the town on the way to Nottingham, all he met 'expressed such a cordial affection, that I could scarce believe what I saw and heard.'

The troubles at Wednesbury were not quite over; for after Whitefield had preached at Christmas in the town some weeks later, many outrages were committed, magistrates refusing to interfere, though professing to be the representatives of peace and of order.

Semi-savages as the inhabitants of what is now known as the Black Country might be, a large proportion of the inhabitants of Cornwall had reached a still lower depth of degradation. Like the miners of the north, they were addicted to brutal sports, while miscreants called *Wreckers* would rob ships in distress, sometimes murder the crew, and not hesitating to allure vessels to their doom by deceptive lights. Such will human nature become when given over to ignorance, drunkenness, and licentiousness. The clergyman at St. Ives encouraged the persecution, and plainly gave out that Wesley and his preachers 'ought to be driven away by blows and not by arguments.' The people of the baser sort responded to the call of such leaders, and some of the scenes which occurred were as disgraceful as those at Wednesbury. There were parts of Cornwall which

were enveloped in almost pagan night. An anecdote is told of one village in Helston district, which contained only one copy of the Scriptures, and that was kept at the public house as a curiosity. On one occasion, during an alarming storm, several superstitious persons hastened to the inn and begged the barman to read a prayer. Willing to oblige his friends, the man took down *Robin Crusoe (sic)* without at first detecting the difference, while one book was as satisfactory as another to those who could not read at all. The people dispersed with satisfaction when the storm abated.

When such were the beginnings, the mighty reformation which took place in Cornwall was all the more wonderful. The Wesleys, their heroic helper John Nelson, and others, were content to work hard as well as to fare hard, both in diet and lodging, for the sake of this far-off county. For a fortnight, Wesley and Nelson slept on a floor without proper bedding ; their table at meal times was equally bare. The preachers were content not only to endure such things, but to turn them into pleasantry. On rising of a morning, Wesley would urge his friend to be of good cheer because the hard boards had not worn the skin off both of his sides. 'Brother Nelson, we ought to be thankful that there are plenty of blackberries,' he remarked on another occasion, while he reined in his horse in order to gather a supply ; 'for this is the best country I ever saw for getting an appetite, but the worst for getting food.'

It was about this time that the country became greatly excited about the expedition of the Young

Pretender on account of his father, James Edward Stuart, who was aspiring to become 'James III.' As the Wesleys and their followers had been represented as being Romanists in disguise, they experienced some passing trouble. It was reported that John had been seen in company with the Pretender in France, and that Charles, in praying for 'the Lord's banished ones,' had made sympathetic reference to the hero of the Jacobites. Each of the brothers had to answer this charge.

It was on August 24, 1744, that Wesley preached for the last time before the University of Oxford—a sermon that gave some offence on account of its outspoken plainness. This was published in common with many other larger or smaller works from time to time. A large part of his reading was got through on horseback, and at his lodging places every minute seems to have been utilized, not only in writing pieces of his own, but in abridging the works of others for popular use. Among the Directions for the Bands were the prohibition of ardent spirits, tobacco, pawn-ing, the wearing of needless ornaments. Publications against him and the work in which he was engaged continued to appear, and were best answered by the endeavours thus made to teach the Gospel to the people. The assistant preachers were now a recognized body, and a power in the country—men who were ready to endure and to suffer for the cause they had espoused. We have to bear in mind that in those days travelling was a very different matter from what it is to-day. Thus, in regard to his north-ward journey commenced on February 18, 1745,

Wesley says that of all the rough journeys he had undertaken that was the roughest, 'between wind, and hail, and rain, and ice, and snow, and driving sleet.' His preachers caught the enthusiasm which animated their leader, and thus bore hardship without complaint.

It was during his visit to the north in 1745, that Wesley first preached at the beautifully situated village of Osmotherley, near Northallerton and the Hambleton Hills. A Carthusian priory had been founded near there in the fourteenth century ; and Wesley's first sermon in the village was given in the Roman Catholic chapel at eleven o'clock at night, the priest, Watson Adams, and a Quakeress named Tyerman, being his conductors to the place, and it was the priest and his friends who aroused the people at their houses to make up a congregation. Though he had preached thrice during the day, and had travelled over sixty miles of bad roads, Wesley had another service at five o'clock on the next morning, many of the people refusing to go to bed through fear of over-sleeping, and thus not being present. The Roman Catholic chapel still remains in the place, but there is one also for the Wesleyan Methodists. Wesley often visited Osmotherley after that adventure ; the romantic beauty of the place pleased him, he would even lodge at the priest's house. Watson Adams died in 1777, having maintained till the last his strange friendship for one whose teaching contradicted his own.

During the terrible commotion and excitement of the year 1745, when the Young Pretender made the

last attempt to regain the English Crown for the Stuarts, Wesley did good service, undismayed by the threatening enemy. We find him preaching at Birmingham amid showers of missiles; the chapel at Leeds was destroyed by the mob who professed zeal for Protestantism; but at Newcastle, where he spent some of the weeks of autumn, the public alarm was still more apparent. The town was strongly fortified; it was full of soldiers, and the profanity and licentiousness of these was a matter of deep grief to the preacher. 'Most of the houses in our street are left without either furniture or inhabitants,' he wrote on September 22. 'Those within the walls are almost equally busy in carrying away their money and their goods, and more and more of the gentry every hour ride southward as fast as they can.' Wesley's open-air services in the great military camp on the moor must have been long remembered by many an old soldier in after years. There were German troops there, and being unable to understand English, these were suddenly surprised by hearing the preacher address them in their own familiar tongue.

While all this was in progress, Wesley's pen seems to have been ever busy preparing material for the press, and drunkards, swearers, and unhappy women had suitable tracts printed for them. It was also at this time that, under the name of 'John Smith,' Archbishop Secker had some correspondence with Wesley.

CHAPTER VIII

WESLEY'S SOLDIER FRIENDS

ALTHOUGH he as thoroughly disliked war as any Christian man could do, Wesley so greatly admired the bravery, which not seldom became heroism, of the Methodist soldiers in the Continental wars, that he frequently mentions them in his Journal.

John Haime was born in 1710, at Shaftesbury, where his father was a gardener. His early experience was similar to that of Bunyan, as told in *Grace Abounding*. The discipline he passed through was long and trying, but at length he enlisted for a soldier, though he had a wife and children dependent upon him. At length he found the peace for which he craved, and in due time became a preacher among his comrades in the army. He would write to Wesley asking for advice, or giving accounts of the progress of the Gospel among the soldiers. 'But by all means miss no opportunity,' wrote Wesley, in one of his letters in reply. 'Speak and spare not; declare what God has done for your soul; regard not worldly prudence; be not ashamed of Christ, or of His Word, or of His servants; speak the truth even in the midst

of a crooked generation ; and all things shall work together for good, until the work of God is perfect in your soul.'

At Dettingen, Haime was under fire for seven hours, and referring to the field after the battle, he says, 'Such a scene of human misery did I never behold.' He lost his way in the heavy rain which followed, but, hearing the drum, at last rejoined his regiment. 'But I could not find the tent which I belonged to,' he adds, 'nor persuade them to take me in at any other. So, being very wet, and much fatigued, I wrapped myself in my cloak, and lay down and fell asleep. And though it still rained upon me, and the water ran under me, I had as sweet a night's rest as ever I had in my life.'

Under Haime, and others like minded, Methodism so prospered in the English army in active service on the Continent, that the society had three hundred members and seven preachers. While others might be most excited over the operations against the French, Wesley himself was chiefly interested in this holy war, which spread even to the Hanoverian army. At Fontenoy, May 11, 1745, Haime says, 'I stood the hottest fire of the enemy for about seven hours ; but I told my comrades, "The French have no ball made that will kill me this day." ' The conduct of the Methodists generally was not a little extraordinary, and reference is made to the matter in his Journal by Wesley. 'Indeed, this day God was pleased to prove our little flock, and to show them His mighty power,' says Haime. 'They showed such courage and boldness in the fight as made the officers as well as

soldiers annoyed. When wounded, some cried out, "I am going to my Beloved," others, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." And many that were not wounded earnestly desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ. When W. Clements had his arm broken by a musket ball, they would have carried him out of the battle ; but he said, "No, I have an arm left to hold my sword ; I will not go yet." When a second shot broke his other arm, he said, "I am as happy as I can be out of Paradise." John Evans, having both his legs taken off by a cannon ball, was laid across a cannon to die ; where as long as he could speak he was praising God with joyful lips.'

This infection of Methodism, as they regarded it, was an offence to certain chaplains and officers, so that many complaints were carried to the Duke of Cumberland, who asked several questions, and at last spoke to Haime himself, the result being that an order was given for him to preach anywhere, and that no one should molest him.

When Haime was discharged from service and returned to England he preached at Shaftesbury, his native town, and gathered a society there. He was lodged for a time in Dorchester Gaol ; but when a gentleman commissioned him to employ a lawyer, volunteering to pay all costs, the persecutors soon altered their tone, well knowing that their action was utterly opposed to English law. He became a travelling preacher, and was sometimes Wesley's travelling companion.

When in Ireland in 1785, Wesley heard a strange account of a soldier who saved a poor widow from

robbery by shooting dead the miscreant who would have taken her money. The affair happened at Prosperous, near Dublin.

The woman in question owed £14 for rent, but was able only to pay an instalment of £7, which her landlord would not accept, notwithstanding many entreaties. In the evening she returned home with the gold in her pocket, which had been got together with so much difficulty; and when within a mile or two of home a poor and fatigued soldier was taken up. On arriving at the house the man pleaded so hard for a night's lodging, that at length the widow arranged for herself and the girl to sleep together, while the soldier occupied the spare room. During the night, two men with disguised faces broke into the house; and being awakened, the widow charged the soldier with bringing his comrades to rob her. She was mistaken, however; for the man rose, seized his gun, and when the would-be robbers ran off he fired after them, and killed one on the spot, who turned out to be the landlord who, a few hours before, had refused to receive the instalment of £7.

Among Wesley's soldier friends should be included Duncan Wright—1736–1791—whose services were much valued. He was a native of Perthshire, and was connected with several good families. His education was somewhat neglected, and at the age of eighteen he enlisted for a soldier—the tenth regiment of foot. 'None of my friends knew what was become of me, till I wrote my mother from Limerick in Ireland,' he says. 'My mother, being

infirm, did not survive this long ; she died the spring following ; and I fear my disobedience hastened her departure.' After he enlisted his first thought was, 'Now I have done for soul and body,' so impossible did it seem to him for a soldier to be religious.

The moral atmosphere of the barrack-room was then very low, but Wright was not disposed to sink to the degraded level of his associates. 'I therefore bought and borrowed all the plays, novels, and romances I could lay my hands upon,' he says ; 'reading late and early.' When, however, a comrade reproved him for reading so much trash he took to religious books, and soon after became associated with the Methodists. He came in contact with Wesley himself ; he became a zealous evangelist in the army, but found that he could not carry on that kind of work without some opposition and consequent suffering, terrible as the need for such labours was. 'Were the chaplains men of real piety and courage, much good might be done in the army,' it is said ; 'but the chaplaincy is generally a kind of sinecure, and the care of souls is left to any worthless wretch that will do it at an easy rate. When we lay in one city, the care of four or five regiments was left to an unhappy man who was an object of common ridicule among the soldiers for his perpetual drunkenness.'

In the remarkably genial weather in the early spring of 1766, Duncan Wright accompanied Wesley on the road. Writing on March 17, the latter says : 'Seventeen such days in the beginning of March, I suppose few men have known.' Then it turned cold. On the 19th Wesley adds : 'We called at a little inn,

about sixteen miles from Eversham. But as Duncan Wright and I had our hoods on, the good woman was frightened, and did not care to take us in. So we rode a mile or two further to another house, where we came in season.' The woman in this house was sufficiently courageous to entertain them, and also to converse about her affairs. 'Before I married, I used to kneel down in the cowhouse, to pray to God for all I wanted,' she said: 'but now I am encumbered with worldly cares; and yet God has not forgotten me. Last winter, when my husband lost the use of all his limbs, I prayed to God for him, and he was well.' Wesley adds, that 'This woman knew nothing about the Methodists; but God is nigh to all that call upon Him.'

As one who had an adventure with the army of Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender, Alexander Mather may be included among Wesley's military hero friends. When he was about twelve years of age, 'out of a childish frolic,' he followed the rebel army. 'Many mighty ones fell on Culloden Heath, and in the way to Inverness, and indeed on every side; yet I was mercifully preserved.' His craven-hearted father refused to admit him; but his mother, having more of the heroine in her, conducted her little fugitive son some miles across the country to the house of her brother; and the adventures of the two show what the state of Scotland at the time of the last civil war was. After showing how he was nearly drowned through a mishap to a boat, Mather and his mother travelled eighteen miles across the country. 'But we could not travel without much

danger,' he says, 'as the country was full of parties, both horse and foot, who abused all the strangers they met with, and often took them prisoners. When we came near a town, we inquired of one we met where we could have a quiet lodging. She said she could recommend us to no inn ; for they would inform the soldiers of us, who were very rude to all strangers, especially to women ; but if we would put up with the house of a poor man, she knew one that she thought would receive us. So she conducted us to a little cottage, where we found the man engaged in family worship. When it was ended he looked upon my mother and said, "Good wife, I have no place fit to entertain you, who appear to have a good home somewhere. Neither can I protect you, if the soldiers hear you are in my house. But if you please to sit by the fire with a little straw for the lad to lie on, you are welcome." They then gave us something to eat and drink, which we received with thankfulness to God. The good woman then laid me down on the straw, and sat by my mother till the morning ; when, having been commended to God by our host in prayer, we went on our journey.'

The child's uncle was willing to take charge of him. but his aunt being afraid, he was soon told, 'You must go hence.' 'So I set off, with one to guide me across the mountains. He then left me to find my way as I could, to a place and a person I had never heard of before.' After staying there and elsewhere until November, he thought to return home ; 'but when I came, my father would not let me come into his house,' adds Mather. 'Nay, he

went and made information against me to the commanding officer; and I should have been sent to prison, had not a gentleman of the town interferred for me, and procured leave for me to lodge at my father's house.' When we consider that Mather was considerably below our present school age, his adventures do not afford us any very agreeable notion either of the times or the government of George II.

He settled as a working baker in London in due time, and becoming associated with Wesley at the Foundery, he became a recognized preacher, afterwards taking to the work of a circuit. Until he left his baking he tried his strength to the utmost, thus showing by what rare zeal the early Methodist preachers were animated. 'I had no time for preaching but what I took from my sleep,' he says, 'so that I had frequently not eight hours of sleep in a week. This, with hard labour, constant abstemiousness, and frequent fasting, brought me so low, that in a little more than two years I was hardly able to follow my business. My master was often afraid I should kill myself; and perhaps his fear was not groundless.'

Thomas Payne, who died at the age of forty-two in 1783, was a quondam soldier who also served as a travelling preacher under Wesley. He was a native of Gloucestershire, and his parents were godly people. He came to London, and appears to have been associated with Whitefield's congregation; but naturally having 'an inclination to see the world,' he enlisted in the service of the East India Company, and was

stationed at St. Helena. He bears testimony to the general profligacy which prevailed.

At the foreign station he met with one who had been educated at Wesley's Foundery School, and with one other they were a company of three who desired to walk in the Christian pathway. In connection with this little society he relates what will be to many another incredible adventure.

'My companions and I were greatly strengthened by an uncommon trial that befel us soon after. We frequently went out at night to pray by the side of a mountain. One night as we were walking together, and talking of the things of God, I heard a noise, and something in the form of a large bear pursuing me closely. My hair stood on end, and, as we were walking arm in arm, I suddenly pulled both my companions round with me. They both saw him, and one of them fainted away. It then reared itself upon its hind legs into the air. I said, "Satan, we are come hither to serve God ; and we will do it, in spite of thee, and all the devils in hell." Instantly it sunk into the earth ; we then prayed upon the very spot, and soon found ourselves strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.'

In England and Ireland, Thomas Payne laboured as one of the most valued preachers of the Revival. At the time of his death, his friend, Charles Boone, called him, 'this Christian hero, this valiant soldier of Christ ; who counted not his life dear to him, so that he might finish his course with joy.' Still more emphatic was the testimony of Wesley himself : 'Mr. Payne, who had been in the army for many

years, was a plain, honest, zealous man ; fearing neither men nor devils. And as he bore down all opposers while he lived, so in death he triumphed over his last enemy, being more than conqueror through Him who hath loved him.'

Sampson Staniforth, 1720-1799, was a native of Sheffield, who, having no religious advantages in the way of training in youth, entered the army and served in the Continental campaign, but returned to England when the Young Pretender appeared in the north. Before he left for foreign service at all he was quartered at Edinburgh, where he arrived shortly before the Great Frost, as it came to be called, of 1740. 'I was drafted into one of the companies that lay in the castle,' he says ; and his experience shows what were the hardships of a soldier's life in those days. 'There were no barracks then, but we lay upon straw in the vault, and throughout the winter had but one fire for seventy men.' On the Continent he missed the battle of Dettingen, but stood for some hours the hottest fire at Fontenoy.

After beating about in the north hoping to catch the rebel army, he was quartered at Greenwich at Christmas, 1745, and at that time Staniforth was no longer the wild young fellow he had been of old, and his experience affords us an insight into the workings of early Methodism.

'On Christmas Day we went to church, and spent the evening at Brother Giles's, in singing and prayer,' he says. 'We lay here till April, 1746, but had orders not to go above a mile from our quarters. Hearing these orders read, I went to the commanding

officer, who said, "Well, Sampson, what do you want?" I said, "Leave, sir, if you please, for two or three of us to go to London twice or thrice a week." He said, "For what?" I answered, "To hear preaching." "What!" said he, "cannot you go to church?" I said, "Yes, sir; and I count it both my duty and privilege so to do. But I am much united in affection to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, and I want to see and hear him, and be joined with him and his people." He looked at me and said, "Well, thou art the same honest man as before." He immediately wrote an order for me and one or two more to pass to and from London as often as we pleased. He added that he knew Mr. Wesley, and was glad I had made so good a choice.'

After his discharge from the army he laboured as a preacher for half a century, and then died, much respected and greatly regretted.

CHAPTER IX

WORK AND PROGRESS—A SERIOUS ILLNESS

DURING the year 1746, Wesley left off the use of tea, and believing it to be hurtful to the constitution, he advised others to follow the example. After twelve years, however, Dr. Fothergill recommended him to resume its use. It was then, also, that as one who had acquired some competent knowledge of medicine, he established a dispensary at the Foundery and another at Bristol for the poor; a surgeon and an apothecary were employed, difficult or complicated cases being left to be dealt with by qualified physicians. The experiment succeeded so well that Wesley was able to write, 'Within six weeks, nine in ten of them who had taken these medicines were remarkably altered for the better, and many were cured of disorders under which they had laboured for ten, twenty, forty years.' More was done for the poor in other ways—a house for widows was set up at the Foundery, while the first stone was laid of the boarding-school at Kingswood, Bristol. A loan society was also established. It was now, also, that he sent forth the first

of the four volumes of sermons, which with the New Testament notes became a text-book of theology for his preachers.

Although the disorders in certain places did not cease, the progress of religion was manifest in all directions. There was some persecution at Devizes and Grimsby, the enemy in Cornwall still growled a little; but of that county itself Wesley said in July, 1747, 'There is such a change within these two years as has hardly been seen in any other part of England. Wherever we went, we used to carry our lives in our hands, and now there is not a dog to wag his tongue.' It was now also that the preacher's voice was first heard in Manchester. A first visit to Ireland was also undertaken, and a fortnight was spent in Dublin. Charles Wesley and other preachers continued the work in Ireland, and a large room for preaching was secured in Dublin, and in 1752 a freehold chapel in a good situation was erected. From the capital, in the face of some persecution, the Word spread to some country towns. The preaching adventures of Charles Wesley in Ireland afford materials for a striking story, and the work done by the younger brother in 1747, was well followed up by the elder in the following year. Some of his followers in London regretted that so much time and attention should be given to the Emerald Isle, but Wesley's reply was, 'Have patience, and Ireland will repay you.'

Wesley's most famous friend in the north of England was William Grimshaw, the incumbent of Haworth, the friend of Lady Huntingdon, and as

ardent a preacher of the Word as Wesley himself. Grimshaw was the apostle of the district in which his lot was cast ; he was content to work hard and to fare hard, either at home or on his travels for the sake of giving the Gospel to the people. His bleakly situated and lonely parsonage in a wild corner of the West Riding of Yorkshire, was the same which in after years was associated with the Brontë family. William Grimshaw at Haworth and Vincent Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham, the latter being of Swiss extraction, were equally ardent in the cause of the Revival, their aid and sympathy being greatly valued by the Wesleys. Some called the incumbent of Haworth *Mad Grimshaw*, but they could not but admire his abundant labours. He had his own circuits in which he preached over thirty times a week ; and when Wesley or Whitefield visited the parish, a platform was set up in the churchyard for the preacher, though the prayers would be read in the church. Grimshaw had many eccentric habits ; he would leave the church while the psalm before the sermon was being sung to look after loiterers who could be brought into the service ; he would sleep in a hayloft when his own bed could be given up to one or two travelling preachers ; and to ensure the Gospel being preached at Haworth after his death, he erected at his own cost a chapel and dwelling-house. He had a travelling companion in Thomas Colbeck of Keighley, who also carried the Gospel message throughout the surrounding district, his house being also a resting-place for Wesley or his preachers. Did space permit details might be given of some rough adventures on

the road, and in preaching, which Grimshaw and Wesley had in company.

The year 1749 was remarkable for many things in the history of the Wesleys. While travelling in Wales Charles Wesley had been entertained by the Gwynne family, and one of the daughters became his wife on April 8. John Wesley was also hoping to marry Grace Murray, a young widow employed at the Newcastle Orphan House, and one who was devoted to the work of the Church, while she was fascinating in her person. When Wesley asked Grace to become his wife, she was greatly moved by the honour he proposed to confer upon her. Meanwhile, attentions were paid to her by one of the preachers named John Bennet ; but when Wesley plainly asked, 'Which will you choose ?' her answer was, 'I am determined, by conscience as well as by inclination, to live and die with you.' Charles Wesley was against the match, because Mrs. Murray had been a domestic servant, and her poor origin would prevent her commanding the respect due to his brother's wife. If Wesley was in danger of making a mistake, he was saved by Mrs. Murray marrying Bennet, who, however, died about ten years afterwards, his widow surviving him by about forty-four years. Mr. Tyerman does not think that Grace was such a perfect character as Wesley believed her to be. 'She was a woman of energy, of dauntless resolution, and of a certain sort of religious zeal ; and late in life she seems to have been a loving, lovely Christian ; but at the period of her dualistic courtship she was uneducated, vain, fickle, selfish, and presuming.' Wesley is reported to have said to her

just before her dishonourable marriage, 'Grace Murray, you have broken my heart.' Nearly forty years later Mrs. Bennet and the great man, who had too highly valued her, met in London, and the interview is said to have been affecting.

The year 1749 was characterized by some disturbances by anti-Methodist mobs, though the most disgraceful riots were at Cork. Still ever busy with his pen, Wesley, among other things, prepared books for the Kingswood School, in which the children of some of the local preachers were now educated. He also commenced the issue of his Christian Library—'consisting of extracts and abridgments of the choicest pieces of Practical Divinity, which have been published in the English tongue, in fifty volumes.' We find Wesley mentioning this project to his friend, and the Lombard Street banker, Mr. E. Blackwell, to whom the founder of Methodism was indebted for money for the poor, and at whose pleasant house at Lewisham he did much of his literary work. 'I should print only a hundred copies of each,' wrote Wesley to this friend, 'Brother Downes would give himself up to the work; so that whenever I can procure a printing-press, types, and some quantity of paper, I can begin immediately.' These volumes were afterwards all revised.

The earthquakes in London on February 8 and March 8, 1750, were memorable occurrences; for not only were the shocks violent, but the credulity of the Londoners in believing the prediction of a crazy soldier that the visitation would be repeated in April was more remarkable than the earthquake itself.

Sherlock, Bishop of London, issued a pamphlet addressed to the Londoners, in which he called attention to prevailing sins, and tens of thousands were rapidly sold. The rich hurried away from London, and thousands who could not remove remained all night in the open air before the expected final shock, the women being clothed in warmer clothing or 'earthquake gowns'! Whitefield preached in Hyde Park at midnight to a vast crowd. Wesley turned the excitement to good account by preaching special sermons, and a discourse by Charles Wesley, as well as some hymns suitable to the occasion, were published.

In the midst of the commotion Wesley set out for Bristol, and in reference to his labours at this time Henry Moore remarks, 'He generally preached three or four, and sometimes five, times in the day, and sometimes rode thirty or forty, sometimes fifty, miles. Thus did he labour while he could ride on horseback; nor do we believe there could be an instance found, during the space of forty years, wherein the severest weather hindered him for one day.' Then, although the temper of the rough populace had greatly improved in many places, mob violence in others caused the preachers to feel that they carried their lives in their hands. At the same time some of the adventures met with were almost comical. Thus at Shepton Mallet we find Wesley wondering 'what was become of the mob,' which in reality was searching for him at one end of the town, while the great evangelist was preaching quietly at the other end. After finishing and getting indoors the preacher himself tells us what followed.

'One of their captains, in his great zeal, had followed us into the house, and was now shut in with us. He did not like this, and would fain have got out, but it was not possible. So he kept as close to me as he could, thinking himself safest when he was near me. But staying a little behind (when I went up two pair of stairs, and stood close on one side, where we were a little sheltered) a large stone struck him on the forehead, and the blood spurted out like a stream. He cried out, "Oh, sir, are we to die to-night? What must I do? What must I do?" I said, "Pray to God. He is able to deliver you from all danger." He took my advice, and began praying, I believe, as he had scarce ever done before.'

Being cool and collected, as he always was in a crisis of this kind, Wesley and a companion walked out at the back door while the mob broke in at the front, and they went on to Oakhill. 'I was riding on in Shepton Lane, it being now quite dark, when he cried out, "Come down! Come down from the bank!"' says Wesley. 'I did as I was desired; but, the bank being high, and the side almost perpendicular, I came down all at once, my horse and I tumbling over one another. But we both rose unhurt. In less than an hour we came to Oakhill, and the next morning to Bristol.'

Adventures of this kind diversified his adventures with the mob. Many of these are vividly described by Wesley himself, and while interesting in themselves, they illustrate the preacher's unwavering trust in God. Take this example—

'I took horse in Bristol for Wick, where I had

appointed to preach at three in the afternoon. I was riding by the wall through St. Nicholas' Gate (my horse having been brought to the house where I dined) just as a cart turned short from St. Nicholas' Street, and came swiftly down the hill. There was just room to pass between the wheel of it and the wall ; but that space was taken up by the carman. I called to him to go back, or I must ride over him. But the man, as if deaf, walked straight forward. This obliged me to hold back my horse. In the mean time the shaft of the cart came full against his shoulder with such a shock as to beat him to the ground. He shot me forward over his head, as an arrow out of a bow, where I lay, with my arms and legs, I know not how, stretched out in a line close to the wall. The wheel ran by close to my side, but only dirtied my clothes. I found no flutter of spirit, but the same composure as if I had been sitting in my study. When the cart was gone I rose. Abundance of people gathered round, till a gentleman desired me to step into his shop. After cleaning myself a little I took horse again, and was at Wick at the time appointed. I returned to Bristol (where the report of my being killed had spread far and wide) time enough to praise God in the great congregation, and to preach on "*Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast.*"'

Part of the spring and summer were spent in Ireland, where, despite the dangers which still attended field-preaching, Wesley was, on the whole, satisfied with the progress made. As regards Bristol itself, there was some cause for disappointment. He was

grossly libelled by the local press ; the members of the society showed some decline ; and a bad boy who had attempted to corrupt all his fellows was expelled from Kingswood school. In London several chapels were now held in trust, and Wesley and his followers were becoming more and more widely separated from the Moravians.

The unhappy marriage of Wesley and Mrs. Vizelle, a widow, belongs to the year 1751. When first met with, this lady, as Henry Moore tells us, ' seemed truly pious, and was very agreeable in her person and manners. She conformed to every company whether of the rich or the poor ; and she had a remarkable facility and propriety in addressing them concerning their true interests.' Under the peculiar conditions, Wesley might well have preferred still to live in a single state ; but, as it was, the opinion seems to be correct that, had he searched the British Isles, he could hardly have found one more unsuited to his requirements than the woman he chose. Henry Moore adds, ' She travelled with him for some time, but afterward she would fain have confined him to a more domestic life ; and having found by experience that this was impossible, she unhappily gave place to jealousy. This entirely spoiled her temper, and drove her to many outrages. She repeatedly left his house, and was brought back by his earnest importunities. At last she seized on part of his Journals, and many other papers, which she would never afterwards restore ; and taking her final departure, left word that she never intended to return.' This was in 1771, and Wesley said, ' I have not left her ; I have not put her away : I will not

call her back.' He kept to that decision, and ten years later, and ten years before her husband's death, Mrs. Wesley passed away at Camberwell.

The progress which the Revival had made in 1751 is well indicated in one of Wesley's references to Birmingham. 'The last time I preached at Birmingham, the stones flew on every side,' he said. 'If any disturbance were made now, the disturber would be in more danger than the preacher.' Equally encouraging was the confession of a barber who shaved Wesley at Bolton. 'When you were at Bolton last, I was one of the greatest drunkards in the town ; but I came to listen at the window, God struck me to the heart, and twelve months ago I was converted.' At Leeds, in 1752, he had the satisfaction of preaching in a new chapel ; and peace reigned at Sheffield because at York assizes the magistrates were sentenced to rebuild the chapel which the mob had destroyed. Then of Wakefield Wesley was able to ask, 'Who would have expected to see me preaching in Wakefield Church, to so attentive a congregation, a few years ago, when all the people were as roaring lions ; and the honest man did not dare to let me preach in his yard, lest the mob should pull down his houses.' The reception was still rough at Hull and York, however, and at Chester the meeting-house was destroyed. Wesley left London in the middle of March, and returned in November. He moved about the North of England, visited Scotland for the first time, and gave twelve weeks to Ireland. Volumes of his *Christian Library* continued to appear, but their publication entailed a loss.

While labouring in London, in the early part of 1753, Wesley visited the Marshalsea Prison, which is described as 'a nursery of all kinds of wickedness,' and the condition of which shows what was the kind of life led in English gaols at that date. 'I found some in their cells underground,' he says. 'Others in their garrets, half starved with cold and hunger ; but I found not one of them unemployed, who was able to crawl about the room.' While thus caring for the poor in one direction, he was carefully watching Dr. Franklin's experiments in electricity, which Wesley called 'a thousand medicines in one,' and hoped would prove a vast boon to certain classes of patients who came to the Foundery dispensary.

Towards the end of 1753 Wesley suffered from the most alarming illness which ever interfered with his great work. Otherwise his abundant labours showed no falling off, while the results were as striking as ever. When he made his northern tour in the early part of the year, he wrote to his friend Blackwell concerning the fewness of the labourers to gather in the great harvest. Some parts of England were visited for the first time. Thus at Leicester he preached to a great open-air congregation which astonished him by its quiet and serious behaviour. He also visited the Isle of Wight for the first time, and went down into Cornwall. His health had not been so good as usual for some time previously, and while in Essex, towards the end of the year, he caught cold, which soon developed into what was supposed to be a galloping consumption. Whitefield felt confident that his friend's work was done, and that he was

going home. 'I pity the Church, I pity myself, but not him,' wrote the great evangelist. 'We must stay behind in this cold climate, while he takes his flight to a radiant throne.' Happily, Wesley consulted the Quaker physician, Dr. Fothergill, the first medical man of his age, who insisted on his patient leaving London at once, adding, 'If anything does thee good, it must be the country air, with rest, asses' milk, and riding daily.' Wesley retired to the mansion of his friends, the Blackwells, at Lewisham, where all that wealth, good nursing, and attention could do was done. In the opening days of 1754, he was able to proceed to Bristol; and being altogether interrupted during four months in preaching, Wesley worked hard at his Notes on the New Testament. He had for long hoped to accomplish this, but would probably never have done it if he had not been too weak to travel, and yet strong enough to sit for twelve hours a day at literary work. Though he recommenced preaching in the spring, and got through some amount of travelling, the year 1754 has to be regarded as a time of some continued weakness. Nevertheless, eight volumes were added to the Christian Library, while several other works were issued in addition to what was done in preparing the Notes on the New Testament. Thus, in quite as complete a sense as the term was ever applied to Richard Baxter, Wesley was for the time being an industrious invalid.

As months passed by, however, strength returned, and the great evangelist was able to carry on his work as he had done in preceding days. A first visit to Liverpool was made in April, 1755, and the

sea-port is described as one of the neatest and best built towns in the country, the streets were straight, while the place itself was twice the size of Chester, and two-thirds had arisen since the death of Queen Anne. 'If it continue to increase in the same proportion, in forty years more it will nearly equal Bristol,' it is added. 'The people in general are the most mild and courteous I ever saw in a sea-port town; as, indeed, appears by their friendly behaviour, not only to the Jews and Papists who live among them, but even to the Methodists.' The chapel was even larger than the one at Newcastle, and among the notable converts was a tailor named Timothy, whose wife so hated her husband's new ways, that she even tried to drive a number of pigs into the chapel during service time. Instead of entering the building, however, the pigs ran off in another direction, and this suggested to the stout mistress of the wash-tub —Mrs. Timothy being a laundress—that she might gratify curiosity by just crossing the threshold herself, to see what was done, and hear what was said. The result was, that the truth reached the woman's heart, and she became a changed character, one who was valiant for the cause.

CHAPTER X

OUR CHIEF TOWNS AS WESLEY FOUND THEM

ON Sunday, December 13, 1767, Wesley was thinking of an engagement he had made to be at Sheerness on the Wednesday following. Other matters had also engaged his thoughts on that day. He had been asked to preach a funeral sermon for one who had come to London thirty years before, and who had prospered; but though he was a good man, 'his money was a great clog to him,' and hindered growth of character. On that same Sunday he also became unwell. 'I found a little soreness on the edge of my tongue,' which the next day spread to my gums and lips; but though 'I knew a little rest would cure all,' it was out of the question to think of taking it, 'for I had appointed to be at Sheerness on Wednesday, the 16th.' If strength allowed he did not consult his own feelings at such times, and accordingly he started long before sunrise on the winter morning, and twelve hours later his horse carried him into the town.

The governor of the fort proved to be such a good friend that he allowed the use of the chapel for the service; but when overcrowded this place became

'hot as an oven,' while the air without was 'exceeding sharp ;' and as going from one to the other affected Wesley's voice, 'the good governor cut the knot,' by arranging for another room, in which 'we had a comfortable hour.'

The old town of Sheerness, as Wesley found it, had its houses chiefly of wood ; and sixty or seventy years later house accommodation was still so scarce that numbers of families actually lived on the water. The population is now something like 15,000 ; but in the sixties of the eighteenth century, the number of inhabitants was considerably below a thousand. Speaking of the place and the people as he found them, Wesley says—

'Such a town as many of these live in, is scarce to be found again in England. In the dock adjoining the fort there are six old men-of-war. These are divided into small tenements, forty, fifty, or sixty in a ship, with little chimneys and windows ; and each of these contain a family. In one of them, where we called, a man and his wife and six little children lived. And yet all the ship was sweet and tolerably clean ; sweeter than most sailing ships I have been in.'

Among the towns which distinguished themselves by violent opposition to the preachers, Devizes had a first place. When Wesley arrived there on January 13, 1747, 'the town was in an uproar from end to end, as if the French were just entering ; and abundance of swelling words we heard, oaths, curses, and threatenings.' Innys, the curate of the parish church, was the chief agent who fomented a riot ; but the

inconvenience fell chiefly on Charles Wesley and those who were with him, who came on the scene rather more than a month later. As the efforts of the Anglican clergyman were seconded by 'the chief gentlemen of the town,' a battalion of hardy ruffians was not wanting to do anything that was required of them. In work of this kind the curate was a skilful organizer, and both in and out of the pulpit he was not backward in telling lies about those to whom he was opposed. Charles Wesley was attacked in his lodgings by a fire-engine, the house being damaged and the furniture spoiled. Nevertheless, the hired mob showed less energy in this kind of business than those above them. When he had again preached in the town prior to his brother's visit, Wesley found that the mob-raisers could not get their men to enlist. 'I found that much pains had been taken again to raise a mob ; but it was lost labour.' Half a century later, or in 1772, how changed was the outlook ! 'I preached very quietly at the Devizes. Scarce one of the old persecutors is alive. Very few of them lived out half their days : many were snatched away in an hour when they looked not for it.'

The condition of Norwich in the year 1772 reveals the fact that the eighteenth century was far from being the ideal period which has sometimes been pictured in the popular imagination. The great advance in the cost of living, and in the amount of taxes which had to be paid, had not yet set in ; but times were very hard, and though people were in blissful ignorance of what was in store for them, something far worse was on before. Norwich was a

great centre for the manufacture of shawls, worsted stuffs, silken goods, etc., but in the year just noted all seems to have been under a cloud. At noon on October 26, Wesley 'set out in the stage coach, and in the evening came to Norwich.' As the distance is 108 miles, that must have been remarkably good travelling for those times. The general outlook of the following morning was far from cheering. 'Finding abundance of people were out of work, and consequently in the utmost want (such a general decay of trade having hardly been known in the memory of man), I enforced in the evening, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'" The pinchings of want in this instance seemed to have the effect of making the suffering people more willing to receive the preacher's message.

At this time, Colchester was also in a similar plight to Norwich. The society increased in some degree, 'but most of them were hard beset with poverty.' They had been a poor folk from the first; but in the fall of 1772 they were 'in greater want than ever through scarcity of business.' It is even added, 'Few of our societies are rich; but I know none in the kingdom so deplorably poor as this.'

When Wesley was at St. Albans in August, 1770, when 'the heat was as great as I remember in Georgia,' he characterized the abbey as one of the largest, as well as 'one of the most ancient buildings in the kingdom, near a thousand years old.' As is well known, the abbey church is the place of

sepulture of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, who was regarded as a martyr by those who were his contemporaries 323 years before, or in the middle of the fifteenth century. While speaking of St. Albans Abbey Church as he found it, Wesley adds: 'Near the east end is the tomb and vault of good Duke Humphrey. Some now living remember since his body was entire. But after the coffin was opened so many were curious to taste the liquor in which it was preserved that in a little time the corpse was left bare, and then soon mouldered away. A few bones are now all that remain. How little is the spirit concerned at this!' Would not this be incredible if it was not so well attested? Surely it would now be impossible to get people to drink liquid from a coffin which had lain in the vault for more than three centuries!

One thing has to be put down to the credit of the townsfolk of the eighteenth century which appears now to be obsolete—it was possible to gather an early morning congregation even in bitter winter weather. Such services appear to have been a survival of lectures in London of the preceding century, which attracted good assemblies at six o'clock a.m.

The severe weather of an exceptionally severe winter would naturally be a temptation to linger in some comfortable, old-fashioned town, but preachers were not expected to yield to it. Thus, when he was at Bury St. Edmunds in January, 1761, we find Wesley remarking, 'I would gladly have stayed a day or two here, had it been only on account of the severity of the weather; but I had work to do elsewhere.' Thus,

after preaching, and in the still early morning, 'as bitter a one as most I have known,' he and a companion set out to reach their next halting-place at Norwich at three in the afternoon. 'I never felt so piercing a wind as that which met us in riding out of the gate at daybreak,' he says. 'To think of looking up was a vain thing: I knew not whether I should not lose one of my eyes.' The miserable roads, which almost obliged travellers to use saddle-horses, of course completed the discomfort.

At the commencement of the reign of George III., when we find Wesley at Yarmouth, the town would still be famous for its herring fishery, but something was also done in the way of silk throwing and winding.

In the year 1761, however, Yarmouth was chiefly remarkable for the extraordinary violence with which the people threatened and opposed the preachers of the Methodist Revival. To Wesley, Yarmouth was 'a large and populous town, and as eminent both for wickedness and ignorance as any sea-port in England.' Those who had attempted to teach them better had done so 'at the hazard of their lives.' Under such conditions the town might have been left to itself, the people being allowed to go their own way; but that would not have been in accordance with the custom of the preachers of either camp, Calvinist or Arminian. It happened in the course of God's providence that just when the outlook was so bad that, according to appearances it could not be worse, Howel Harris, the Welsh evangelist who had made heroic efforts for the reclamation of his native land

visited Yarmouth, when a new era seemed to open. When Harris commenced his work, Wales was sunk in dense moral darkness, and was afflicted with all of the evils which arise from ignorance. There seemed to be none who had any true knowledge of God. 'A universal deluge of swearing, lying, revelling, drunkenness, fighting, and gaming had overspread the country like a mighty torrent.' Night after night Howel Harris preached with such power and earnestness that he proved to be just the man for Great Yarmouth, 'none daring to oppose him,' says Wesley, who afterwards visited the town ; and as the preacher was accompanied by the regiment in which he was an officer, the fisher-folk and herring-curers might have found it too risky to pelt the preacher. The way was so well prepared for others to follow, that when Wesley himself went to Yarmouth, 'the house was presently more than filled ; and, instead of the tumult which was expected, all were as quiet as at London.'

'At Sibsey, on the edge of the Fens,' we find that there were still 'a few wild colts' in the fall of 1761. The main part, however, 'were serious and deeply attentive. So also were most of the congregation even at Boston, though much astonished, as not being used to field preaching.' They were greatly reformed, when compared with what they were, however ; for the assistant preachers Michell and Mather had found their characteristics something akin to those of wild beasts. At that time the town was the largest in the county after Lincoln, and 'Boston Stump,' which Wesley ascended, was supposed to be 'by far the highest tower in the kingdom.' A good

congregation was attracted, many being 'much affected.' Instead of a raging mob, there was now a friend to invite the preacher to dinner, and to offer the use of a paddock for the afternoon service; and when the weather was unfavourable, the Baptist minister as readily offered the use of his meeting-house, which was a large one. What we have to take note of is, that to a large proportion of the people whom he addressed the Gospel was a strange thing. 'Most of the chief persons in the town' were present; and many of these 'seemed utterly amazed.' In other respects the outlook showed a great transformation for the better. 'Formerly this town was in the Fens; but the Fens are vanished away: great part of them is turned into pasture, and part into arable land.'

Guisborough in the North Riding of Yorkshire was at that time a place where an open-air preacher would be made to realize that his calling had occasional drawbacks, such as a monk of the Middle Ages would not have taken very much account of. It was there, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, that alum works were first established in England; but as Sir Thomas Chaloner had brought workmen from Italy, he was excommunicated by the Pope.

Though midsummer had hardly arrived, the weather was exceedingly warm; but as an accommodating cloud kept off the sun's glare, a gentleman who wished that Wesley should preach in the market-place, had a table placed for him. Greatly as the Gospel was needed, the place at once proved itself to be 'a bad neighbourhood' in more than one sense. 'There was so vehement stench of stinking

fish, as was ready to suffocate me, and the people roared like the waves of the sea.' The Gospel message was irresistible, however; for presently the crowd as a whole seriously attended while the preacher spoke of 'Jesus Christ, made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.'

After such a conquest through the power of the Word, the preacher would have no doubt about his reception in the evening. At five o'clock he again took his stand 'near the same place,' but probably far enough away to be aside from the effluvia from the stale stock of the fish-dealers. Numbers who attended had been present in the morning; 'yet they were not the same. The change might easily be read in their countenance.'

It was just about this same time that Wesley paid one of his memorable visits to his friend Grimshaw at Haworth. On such occasions the church was so far too small to contain the people who came that the service, after prayers, became an open-air one, the preacher being accommodated on a platform fixed against one of the windows.

What is said about some other places is noteworthy, as showing the general state of the provincial towns at the opening of the reign of George III. Not very long before Colne was 'inaccessible to the Gospel,' but in 1761 a large and orderly congregation could be gathered. Padiham, not far away, seems to have been still 'eminent for all manner of wickedness.' A large crowd assembled, including 'some of the most impudent women I ever saw.' It actually

seemed, however, that even these may have been affected for good.

As regards Sheffield, a chief object of interest towards the end of the eighteenth century was the fine chapel erected by the Duke of Norfolk, a large part of the land on which the town was built being the estate of the Howard family. As regards the chapel, Wesley supposed that there was no other like it in the British Isles, or even in the wide world. 'It is a stone building, an octagon, about eighty feet diameter. A cupola, which is at a great height, gives some, but not much, light. A little more is given by four small windows under the galleries. The pulpit is movable, it rolls upon wheels; and is shifted once a quarter, that all the pews may face it in their turns; I presume the first contrivance of the kind in Europe.'

At Bingham, in the Nottingham district, the evangelist could not but admire 'the exquisite stupidity of the people,' who 'gaped and stared' during a discourse on Death and Judgment, as though the matter was altogether new to them. The assembly included 'two surly, ill-mannered clergymen,' who seemed to be hardly more enlightened than their parishioners. At Loughborough the congregation was as large and as attentive as it had been at Nottingham; and at Leicester a man who was commissioned to cry fresh salmon found the freak to be a failure. In the last year of his life, Wesley supposed Birmingham to be three times the size that it was when he commenced his travels as an evangelist half a century before.

One may also see what were the characteristics

of certain West of England towns. Wesley preached in 'the great Presbyterian meeting-house in Taunton,' in 1775, when he acquitted himself with much more freedom than he would have thought to be possible before 'so brilliant a congregation.' Later on the same day he also conducted a service in 'the dreary preaching-house at Tiverton ;' but there the outlook was more discouraging, 'the people appeared as dull as the place.'

Wesley did some good work in Edinburgh in 1768, preaching in the High School yard and on the Castle Hill. He was interested in Holyrood Palace, which through being utterly neglected was 'swiftly running to ruin,' as was also the case with the palace at Scone. Speaking of the former in 1768, he says: 'The tapestry is dirty and quite faded ; the fine ceilings dropping down ; and many of the pictures in the gallery torn or cut through. This was the work of good General Hawley's soldiers (like general like men !), who, after running away from the Scots at Falkirk, revenged themselves on the harmless canvas !' It was the Young Pretender who defeated Hawley at Falkirk Muir, January 17, 1746.

While Wesley was pleased with Inverness, the people showing a seriousness not to be matched elsewhere, he was quite unable to reach the hearts of the people of Perth. The tedium of the road while riding to that town was relieved by the reading of 'that ingenious tract, Dr. Gregory's Advice to his Daughters.' What was the cause of the townsfolk being so unimpressionable ? 'The generality of the people here are so wise that they need no more

knowledge, and so good that they need no more religion! Who can warn them that are brimful of wisdom and goodness to flee from the wrath to come?' But though a town might present such an outlook, 'poor dead Berwick' being on the Border, the people of the house at every inn in Scotland very willingly attended at morning and evening family prayer when invited to do so.

Wesley naturally found St. Andrews to be one of the most interesting sites in Scotland. The University is the most ancient in the country; it has memories of Scottish Parliaments, and of Cardinal Beaton and his victim Wishart, whose martyrdom hastened on the Reformation. At midsummer, 1776, this was the outlook—

'I paid a visit to St. Andrews, once the largest city in the kingdom. It was eight times as large as it is now, and a place of very great trade. But the sea rushing from the north-east, gradually destroyed the harbour and trade together. In consequence of which whole streets (that were) are now meadows and gardens. Three broad, straight, handsome streets remain, all pointing at the old cathedral, which, by the ruins, appears to have been above three hundred feet long, and proportionately broad and high. So that it seems to have exceeded York Minster, and to have at least equalled any cathedral in England. Another church, afterwards used in its stead, bears date 1124. A steeple standing near the cathedral is thought to have stood thirteen hundred years.'

St. Leonard's College was 'only a heap of ruins'; but two others remained. Of one of these it was

observed that all the windows were broken, the facetious custom being for the students to stone them before leaving for their summer vacation. Wesley naturally asks, 'Where are their blessed governors in the mean time? Are they all fast asleep?' There were about seventy students, and it was supposed that neither Edinburgh nor Glasgow could boast of more than a hundred each. 'So four Universities contain three hundred and ten students!' The five months ending in May was the time for study. 'So they *may* study five months in the year, and lounge all the rest!' adds Wesley, in astonishment. 'Oh where was the common-sense of those who instituted such colleges? In the English colleges every one *may* reside all the year, as all my pupils did; and I should have thought myself little better than a highwayman if I had not lectured them every day in the year but Sundays.'

The Isle of Man was then shut out from the world in a way which we who are living at the present day can hardly realize. There was some difficulty in reaching the island at all; for we find that Wesley 'embarked on board the packet-boat' at Whitehaven, on a Wednesday, and 'landed at Douglas on Friday morning.' There was preaching in the market-place of the town in the evening, the main part of the hearers being seriously affected, though the crowd had a mixture of 'giddy young women.' The natural characteristics in some respects differed from those of the mainland. 'In England we generally hear the birds singing morning and evening; but here thrushes and various other kinds of

birds were singing all day long. They did not intermit even during the noon-tide heat, where they had a few trees to shade them.'

Bishop's Court, 'where good Bishop Wilson resided near three-score years,' was one of the most interesting sites. There was 'something venerable, though not magnificent, in the ancient palace; and it is undoubtedly situated in one of the pleasantest spots of the whole island.' Wilson was Bishop of Sodor and Man from 1698 to 1755; his biography was written by Keble; and when Wesley visited the island there would be many who remembered the bishop, who was ever solicitous for the religious and moral welfare of the islanders, though disposed to be somewhat high-handed in his rule.

Wesley was very well pleased with the general outlook, and with the twenty-two preachers who went the round of the Douglas Circuit. 'I never saw in England so many stout, well-looking preachers together,' he said. 'If their spirit be answerable to their look, I know not what can stand before them.' The services would be carried on in Manx or English. The Douglas Circuit was unique; there was no other like it in the British Isles. 'It is shut in from the world, and having little trade is visited by scarce any strangers. Here are no Papists, no Dissenters of any kind, no disputers. Here is no opposition from the governor (a mild, humane man), from the bishop (a good man), or from the bulk of the clergy.' As regarded the natives, they were 'a plain, artless, simple people, unpolished, that is, unpolluted; few of them are rich or genteel, the far greater part

moderately poor ; and most of the strangers that settle among them are men that have seen affliction.' Wesley's notes refer to the year 1781 ; and a century later the population was still only about fifty-four thousand ; but instead of the island being 'visited by scarce any strangers,' the number of visitors is now about one hundred and thirty thousand annually.

A century and a quarter ago, it was about as difficult to get away from the island as it was to reach it from the mainland. The wind had to be favourable ; if north-east, no boat could get to sea. After leaving the harbour they became becalmed, and Wesley not only gave a sermon on board, he had time to read what Dr. Johnson and Tennant had to say about their adventures in Scotland.

Wesley's visit to Ireland, in 1778, was in some respects a memorable one. He speaks of Sligo as 'this sink of wickedness,' but he was cheered to find that even there, 'there had been for some time a revival of religion.' It was a good symptom that 'most of the gentry of the town' attended the preaching, and for the most part the large congregation was 'remarkably serious and attentive.'

Among the interesting allusions he makes to the history of Ireland there occurs a reference to what is called 'the famous massacre of Sligo,' and accepted as being reliable. 'A little before the Revolution, one Mr. Morris, a Popish gentleman, invited all the chief Protestants to an entertainment ; at the close of which, on a signal given, the men he had prepared fell upon them, and left not one of them alive. As soon as King William prevailed he quitted Sligo. But

venturing thither about twenty years after, supposing no one then knew him, he was discovered, and used according to his deserts.'

In 1778, Belfast was 'said to contain thirty thousand souls ;' at the present time the total is probably something like three hundred thousand. 'The streets are well laid out, are broad, straight, and well built,' remarks Wesley. 'The poor-house stands on an eminence, fronting the main street, and having a beautiful prospect on every side over the whole country. The old men, the old women, the male and female children, are all employed according to their strength ; and all their apartments are airy, sweet, and clean, equal to anything of the kind I have seen in England.'

As one of the most ancient towns of Ulster, great interest was attached to Downpatrick. In old times the place had been much larger, and had consisted of two towns, one for Protestants and one for Roman Catholics, the former being 'encompassed with a wall, and a deep ditch filled with water.' The abbey was an extensive and noble ruin ; and close by, Wesley found an open-air cathedral in which to preach. 'Adjoining to it is one of the most beautiful groves which I ever beheld with my eyes. It covers the sloping side of the hill, and has vistas cut through it every way. In the middle of it is a circular space, twenty or thirty yards in diameter.' The rising ground formed 'a beautiful theatre,' and while 'the sun just glimmered through the trees, it was a glorious opportunity.'

Armagh, the ancient metropolis of Ireland, and at

one time one of the chief seats of learning in Europe, had been greatly improved by the primate, who then had the see, 'so that Armagh is at length rising out of its ruins into a large and populous city.'

In comparing the palace at Armagh with that of the English Bishop of Durham, we have one of those eighteenth-century contrasts which never failed to interest an observer like Wesley. The house of the Irish primate was 'elegantly, but not splendidly, furnished,' the house itself being 'handsome, but not magnificent.' The castle at Durham, in which the bishop resided, was finely situated, while many of the rooms were 'large and stately,' but the furniture was 'mean beyond imagination.' It is added, 'In the largest chambers the tapestry is quite faded, beside that, it is coarse and ill-judged. Take but one instance—in Jacob's Vision you see on the one side a little paltry ladder, and an angel climbing it, in the attitude of a chimney-sweeper ; and on the other side Jacob staring at him, from under a large silver-laced hat.'

Then the vivid little word-picture of the Welsh town of St. Davids is characteristic of the eighteenth century. The surrounding country was pleasant and fruitful ; but the town itself was a 'melancholy spectacle,' quite as woe-begone as the Durham tapestry. 'I saw but one tolerable good house in it,' says Wesley. 'The rest were miserable huts indeed. I do not remember so mean a town even in Ireland. The cathedral has been a large and stately fabric, far superior to any other in Wales. But a greater part of it is fallen already ; and the rest is hastening

into ruin. One blessed fruit (among many) of bishops residing at a distance from their see.'

The brief references of this chapter will enable readers to realize in some measure what the towns of these three kingdoms were like when they were visited by Wesley as a chief evangelist of the Revival.

CHAPTER XI

SOME OF WESLEY'S CHIEF HELPERS

IN addition to the head-quarters at the Foundery, there were now quite half a dozen buildings in London which were used as preaching-stations, and sixteen preachers were employed, the help of such assistants being found to be quite indispensable. These itinerants were in many instances remarkable men, having preaching talents of a high order, and though not regularly educated for the ministerial office, they showed by the success of their labours that they had not undertaken a service to which they had not been called.

Though they were few in number, Wesley's friends and sympathizers among the clergy of the Established Church, to which he himself belonged, were all choice spirits who are still remembered with honour. His brother Charles did not continue to be such a travelling preacher after his marriage that he had been before ; but his influence was still great, and his hymns became a priceless legacy to the Church. Henry Venn, of St. Matthew's, London, was a Cambridge man who had been famous as a

cricket-player; but having given that up because he would not have it said, 'Well struck, parson,' he became 'a Methodist,' the term being then applied to all who showed any serious regard for the Gospel. Grimshaw of Haworth, and Perronet of Shoreham, have been mentioned; but there was William Baddiley, Vicar of Hayfield in the Peak of Derbyshire, who in some respects may have resembled the Yorkshire vicar; and then there were Romaine, Madan, Berridge, who leaned more to Whitefield's views of theology; and Fletcher of Madeley, who, had he lived, might have become Wesley's recognized successor, and whose wife ranks as one of the model women of those times.

Thomas Maxfield, a Bristol convert, was regarded by Wesley as the first lay-preacher who volunteered to assist him as a 'son in the Gospel'; and at one time he was a kind of overseer in London while John Cennick remained at Bristol. These two afterwards separated from their old associates, on account of theological differences, Wesley representing the Arminian and Whitefield the Calvinist section of the Methodist Revival. John Nelson a worthy comrade of the early preachers, has already been mentioned.

Southeby is of opinion that Wesley never took any step more reluctantly than this of appointing lay-preachers; but having committed himself, he was not able to draw back, while the converts would have preached whether he chose to give his sanction or not. Southeby adds, that 'no founder of a monastic order ever more entirely possessed the respect, as

well as the love and admiration of his disciples, or better understood their individual characters, and how to deal with each according to the measure of his capacity.' This may be saying merely in other words, that Wesley was a shrewd observer of human nature, and could in his way instinctively take a man's measure at a glance.

A representative character among the early preachers was John Oliver, the son of a shopkeeper at Stockport, and educated in the Grammar School of that town. When quite a lad, young Oliver was attracted by the Methodists, though they were much spoken against in his father's house and among the friends of the family. Young and impressionable as he was, however, he judged for himself; he attended the meetings, and his heart was so far touched that he desired to go again. Though he was a member of the Church of England, the elder Oliver became quite enraged at his son's showing such a disposition; but whether the means were severe or gentle, they altogether failed to turn the youth from his purpose. Friends pleaded or advised with him equally in vain. When Wesley first met with him, Oliver had really passed through a tragic kind of experience in his own family, his spiritual experience being also of a striking kind. In time he became one of the most laborious and successful of Wesley's helpers.

Though almost a namesake of the above, the Welshman, Thomas Olivers, was not related to him. He lost his father at an early age, and being brought up by a relative on a farm, he lapsed into a profane

and immoral character, notwithstanding that he attended the Church services and learned the catechism and prayers. He went on until he was regarded as the worst boy who had been known in that part of Montgomeryshire for many years. After he left his native country, the odium of bad conduct followed him, and even after conversion the memories of evil followed him. At length young Olivers, being at Bristol, heard Whitefield preach on the text, 'Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?' The words struck home, so that that service marked a new era in the young Welshman's life. After his conversion, Olivers returned to Wales to receive some small property due, and he had no sooner got possession of the money than he went in many directions to pay the debts his now astonished creditors had never expected to receive. He did this after suffering from a very severe attack of small-pox. When all was paid he was too poor to buy another horse; but he was presented with one, which, during the succeeding quarter of a century, carried Olivers over a hundred thousand miles of ground. When Wesley saw this man, he at once formed a correct estimate of him; and, as Southey remarks, 'The daring disposition, the fiery temper, and the stubbornness of the Welshman, were now subdued and disciplined into an intrepidity, an ardour, and a perseverance which were the best requisites for his vocation.' After serving as a preacher for a number of years, Olivers became a kind of superintendent or sub-editor of Wesley's publications in London; but being less successful in this than in preaching, he

had at length to be suspended on account of the many errors he overlooked in the proofs.

On one memorable occasion Alexander Mather, who has been already mentioned, proved to be a match for a lawyer at Wolverhampton who had headed the mob which destroyed the Methodist chapel. The lawyer was told to choose between taking his trial for the then capital offence, or rebuilding the meeting-house at his own expense. The man of law chose the latter alternative. Morally, Wolverhampton was then in a terrible condition. 'None had yet preached abroad in this furious town,' remarks Wesley, in 1761; 'but I was resolved, with God's help, to make a trial, and ordered a table to be set in the inn yard. Such a number of wild men I have seldom seen; but they gave me no disturbance, either while I preached, or when I afterwards walked through the midst of them.'

John Pawson was the son of a small land-owner at Thorner, Yorkshire, who farmed his own land, and also followed the building trade. The family were of good moral and even religious standing according to the notions of that day, but all were much grieved when John was attracted by the Methodists. All the means used to dissuade him were of no avail, however, and before long another son in the family was affected in a similar manner. The two brothers prayed together; at last both father and mother joined in these devotions, then attended the services, the result at last being that all the family became converted. In due course Pawson became an itinerant preacher and a leading member of the Conference.

George Story, a native of Harthill, Yorkshire, who did eminent service as an itinerant preacher for about thirty years, was a man of strong mind and wide reading. Though well brought up, he followed the ways of the world as regarded its pastimes or pleasures for many years, and when he first heard Whitefield preach he was merely entertained by his unrivalled powers, as he would have been at a theatre. He could dispute about the Gospel and the objections to it by the hour ; and it was after one of these somewhat profitless discussions that one asked him, ‘Are you happy?’ As happiness had been the goal of his desire for many a long year, the question arrested him, and that, with some other things which were said, led to his conversion.

If circumstances favoured such a step, Wesley harboured no objection to such preachers as these joining the regular clergy of the Established Church. Thus when Maxfield took holy orders on Wesley’s recommendation, Dr. Barnard, Bishop of Londonderry, said, ‘Sir, I ordain you to assist that good man, that he may not work himself to death.’ The now veteran leader, on the whole, found his men to be a source of great comfort, though of course the men naturally showed great inequality as regarded capacity and in the results of their service. Now and then one might leave the battalion through some differences arising ; or one might turn aside from his original simplicity to indulge in vagaries of his own. George Bell was a notable example of this latter failing, and at last, through thinking that certain impressions on his mind came direct from God, he turned prophet by

predicting, about a month previously, that the world would come to an end on the last day of February, 1763. So much alarm was created that Wesley had to speak both in the pulpit and through the press. 'When the day arrived, he preached at Spitalfields in the evening on "Prepare to meet thy God," thus turning to religious profit the terror which had seized upon many,' Henry Moore tells us. 'After expounding the passage, he largely showed the utter absurdity of the supposition that the world would be at an end that night. But, notwithstanding all he could say, many were afraid to go to bed, and some wandered about in the fields, being persuaded that if the world did not end, at least London would be swallowed up by an earthquake.' Having warned the people of their folly, Wesley himself was fast asleep at ten o'clock.

Meanwhile, Wesley was as industrious an itinerant as ever, and the characteristics of the people among whom he moved are often noted, as are also the effects of the spread of the Gospel among those who at the opening of the Revival had seemed to be wild and uncivilized, the men in some places being still wild-looking. It was in Scotland that the preacher found it hardest of all to make an impression. As regarded England, the common people would not have given much trouble if they had not been led on by others, and once we find Wesley recording that many of these were cut down by death at unexpected times. In and about Sheffield the preachers were not interfered with after certain leading persecutors were thus removed. He says, 'Some time since, a

woman of Thorpe often swore she would wash her hands in the heart's blood of the next preacher that came ; but before the next preacher came she was carried to her long home.' A little before John Johnson settled at Wentworth, a stout, healthy man, who lived there, told his neighbours, 'After May-day we shall have nothing but praying and preaching ; but I will make noise enough to stop it.' But before May-day he was silent in his grave. A servant of Lord R—— was as bitter as he, and told many lies purposely to make mischief ; but, before this was done, his mouth was stopped ; he was drowned in one of the fish-ponds. This shows how the open-air preachers persevered and conquered. 'What marvel the devil does not love field-preaching ? Neither do I,' wrote Wesley, when he was attracting large outdoor congregations at Newcastle in 1759. 'I love a commodious room, a soft cushion, and a handsome pulpit ; but where is my zeal if I do not trample all these under foot in order to save one more soul ?'

While Wesley was thus moving about and showing the earnestness of an apostle, we must not suppose that he was not interested in the ordinary business of the world. He got through an immense amount of reading, not only in divinity, but in general literature. He had an eye, too, for the beauties of Nature, and would turn aside to see any old-time monument or curiosity that promised to repay such attention. He even found his curiosity in such things increase as he grew older. As from first to last he must have travelled a greater distance than that

which intervenes between the earth and the moon, he must have known the British Isles better than any man of his time ; and he moved about for a purpose indeed, when his forty thousand sermons, given in all parts of the empire, are taken into account.

CHAPTER XII

SOME NEW FRIENDS—ENCOURAGING OUTLOOK

WESLEY'S travelling-companion in 1758, when he again made the tour of the North of England and visited Ireland, was Francis Okeley, who had also been educated at the Charterhouse. Before setting out from London, Wesley retired to his loved retreat, the house of his friend Blackwell at Lewisham, to prepare the assize sermon he preached at Bedford on March 10. While the discourse was published at the request of the High Sheriff of the county, the judge, Sir Edward Clive, would have had the preacher dine with him, but Wesley had to hurry northward, and after visiting Epworth and some other places, to embark for Ireland. On June 5, he wrote to his friend Blackwell: 'I have now gone through the greatest part of this kingdom, Leinster, Ulster, and the greater part of Connaught. Time only is wanting. If my brother could only take care of England, and give me but one year in Ireland, I think every corner of this nation would receive the truth as it is in Jesus.'

The truth was, that Charles Wesley had practically ceased to be an itinerant since his marriage, and now

chiefly resided at Bristol with his devoted wife, who was one of those charming characters who rank even as model women among the most excellent of their sex in the Christian Church. As a gifted woman herself, Mrs. Charles Wesley was well matched with her accomplished husband, who, though he differed in many respects from his greater brother, was yet one of the most distinguished evangelists of his time, as well as the chief poet of the Revival.

While he still valued his older friends, Wesley continued to make new ones, some of whom bear very familiar names in the Christian Church. During his visit to Liverpool, in 1758, he first became acquainted with John Newton, then a tide-waiter at the port, and who was afterwards successively curate-in-charge at Olney and the friend of Cowper, and Vicar of St. Mary Woolnoth, London. It was about the same time that Wesley first met with that choice man, John Berridge, Vicar of Everton, who in the epitaph he wrote for himself before his death succinctly sums up his life : 'I was born in sin, February, 1716. Remained ignorant of my fallen state till 1730. Lived proudly on faith and works till 1754. Admitted to Everton Vicarage 1755. Fled to Jesus alone for refuge 1756.' Dying in 1793, Berridge survived Wesley ; and for over twenty years Everton Vicarage was as a lighthouse for the diffusion of Gospel truth in the counties of Bedford, Cambridge, Essex, Herts, and Hunts, their wide area being the vicar's circuit. The first of his four home services on Sundays was at seven in the morning, and he was an itinerant preacher throughout the week, at times

commanding an open-air congregation of over ten thousand persons. Under this ministry thousands were awakened, and large numbers called at Everton Vicarage for religious counsel. Besides the preachers employed, for whose support Berridge gave his own money, and even disposed of his family plate, Mr. Hicks, of Wrestlingworth, as a clerical convert, joined in the itinerant work. In common with others who were like-minded, they were content to endure hardship and ridicule for the Gospel's sake. It was towards the end of the year that Wesley first preached in Everton Church, and both then and at some of Berridge's or Hicks's own services, the phenomenon of *stricken cases*, which had characterized the opening of the Revival, again occurred. In many instances numbers were heard crying for mercy at the same time ; and thousands were awakened to seek the salvation of their souls.

It was now also that Wesley began to correspond with Toplady, who, like Berridge, was a Calvinist, inclining more to the teaching of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. Conyers, Vicar of Helmsley, who invited his parishioners to join in his family prayer ; and the Hon. Walter Shirley, cousin of the Countess of Huntingdon, who had meetings of the Methodist leaders at his own house, were other clergymen with whom Wesley became acquainted about this same time.

The success at various great centres continued to be very encouraging, and when cases of discipline had to be dealt with, Wesley was ever careful that no injustice should be done. 'I desire the leaders may

know their places, and not stretch themselves beyond their line,' we find him writing to Leeds. At Norwich, Newcastle, and Gateshead the success was very marked, while a beginning was being made at Sunderland. The last year of the reign of our last foreign king, George II., was a time of such unrest that prayer-meetings, which Wesley attended, were held at the Countess of Huntingdon's town house to pray for Divine protection from French invasion. The accession of George III., in 1760, was like the opening of a new era; and it might have been that especially for Ireland, if Wesley's prescription had been acted upon—viz. that the chief want of Ireland was faithful Gospel preachers. He continued his visits to that beautiful land, although, on account of his brother having practically ceased to be an itinerant evangelist, the burden weighed more heavily on the shoulders of the elder brother. How uncomplainingly he accepted his lot, however, may be inferred from the fact that, during his Cornwall tour in 1760, he preached thirty times in eleven days without thinking that any extraordinary effort had been made. The only reward sought being the welfare of the people by the diffusion of pure religion was incredible to many on-lookers, who judged the preacher by their own lower standards. In 1760 an anonymous writer accused him of fleecing the poor to build his chapels. 'Don't you know, sir, those houses are none of mine? I made them over to trustees long ago. I have food to eat, and raiment to put on; and I will have no more, till I turn pope or pagan.' Such was the devoted disinterestedness of the man who sought no greater

earthly reward for preaching oftentimes more than three times a day, in addition to meeting the classes and exhorting the societies. When he gave up riding on horseback in his later years, he travelled in what is called 'a lumbering old carriage' with a bookcase inside of it—a veritable travelling study, but not an over-comfortable one, when the bad condition of the roads is taken into account. The coachman appears to have been a man of sympathy, who understood his master's notions and prejudices. On one occasion this man was found rolling about on a bed which had been set apart for his master, his explanation being that Mr. Wesley would not sleep on such a bed until it was made as hard as possible.

Wesley's adventures as an itinerant continued to be varied, and the wide experience he gained made his advice to his preachers of great value. His desire was that there should be no controversy introduced in the public assemblies. 'I have preached twenty years in some of Mr. Whitefield's societies ; yet, to this day, I never contradicted him among his own people,' wrote Wesley to one of his preachers. 'I did not think it honest, neither necessary at all. I could preach salvation by faith, and leave all controversy untouched.' Then the advice is given : 'Keep to this : repentance towards God, faith in Christ, holiness of heart and life, a growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, the continual need of His atoning blood, a constant confidence in Him, and all these every moment to one's life's end.' One of the early converts and preachers of Methodism was John Macgowan, who in youth fought for the Pretender at

Culloden. He afterwards wrote 'The Dialogues of Devils,' and became pastor of the old Baptist congregation at Devonshire Square, London.

Wesley's power over the crowds which continued to gather in the open air was still as great as when the mobs had been more riotous. In the neighbourhood of Whitby a large cat jumped out of a window and ran along on the shoulders of the people, who, however, took no more notice of the occurrence 'than if the cat had been a butterfly.' Such a cat was neither a persecutor nor an enemy. Then the pigs, already mentioned, which refused to disturb a meeting, were well matched by the ass, which the mob drove into the chapel at Rotherham during the preaching of the opening sermon. This animal was described by Wesley as his 'most attentive hearer ;' for the docile animal 'stood in the aisle, lifted up its eyes to the preacher, remained quiet till the sermon was ended, then turned round and walked leisurely away, without making the disturbance that the mob expected.' By the time that he reached his sixtieth year, disturbances in the north of England became more and more rare, while the conquest of Cornwall was so far complete that it was said that both popular tumult and persecution seemed to be forgotten. One of Wesley's anecdotes, however, related to a time when he was arraigned in Cornwall for irregular proceedings before a clerical magistrate who was an old Oxford acquaintance. While in the act of censuring Wesley, the floor of the room gave way, the magistrate was hurled from his seat, the table was overturned, the people screamed, and all was confusion. 'Well.

sir, shall we proceed further in this business?' asked the preacher, when order was restored. 'No, no; go your way, Mr. Wesley,' was the reply, '"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Many of his adventures at inns or in private houses were characteristic of the times. Thus, on one occasion in Ireland, we find Wesley giving a guinea to a poor travelling player, besides satisfying the demands of an angry landlady, who threatened to sell the player's belongings and to turn him out-of-doors. 'You serve the stage, young man,' said Wesley. 'Would I could teach you to serve your God; you would find Him a better Master.' One who was present remarked that he supposed the gentleman was a clergyman. 'A clergyman? Not he, indeed!' cried the landlady. 'It's only John Wesley, the Methodist, that goes preaching up and down, and draws all the idle vagabonds of the country after him.'

The outlook continued to brighten after the accession of George III. Referring to the year 1762 Wesley says, 'Such a season I never saw before. Such a multitude of sinners were converted, in all parts, both of England and Ireland, and so many were filled with pure love.' At the same time discussions concerning Christian doctrines and Church discipline became more frequent and earnest. As regards the doctrine of Christian Perfection, which was one of the things in dispute, Wesley modified his opinions somewhat as he grew older, and he never himself professed to have attained to that condition.

The progress of the work was attended by many

trials and anxieties. Wesley desired that all the clergy of the Established Church who were in sympathy with him should be banded together in union, but the applications made ended in disappointment. The occasional falling away of a small proportion of the members was also a source of trouble. So also were the debts on the chapels, which in 1766 amounted to nearly £12,000, a comparatively insignificant sum when the members are counted by hundreds of thousands, but a formidable item when the total was only about twenty-five thousand. 'We shall all be ruined if we go on thus,' said Wesley. Another cause of perplexity was the persistency with which many people clung to bad habits or dishonest customs, which, in the course of generations, had almost ceased to be considered sinful at all. Hence warnings and advice would be given which in these days it would be unnecessary to offer to a Christian society. In prospect of a general election, in 1764, the members at Bristol were urged to beware of bribery. 'On no account take money, or money's worth. Keep yourselves pure. Give, not sell, your vote. Touch not the accursed thing, lest it bring a blight upon you and your household.' Then there was the temptation to smuggle. 'Have nothing to do with stolen goods,' said Wesley. 'Neither sell nor buy anything that has not paid the duty. No, not if you could have it at half price. Defraud not the king any more than your fellow-subject. Never think of being religious unless you are honest. What has a thief to do with religion?' The inhabitants on the coast

of Cornwall especially needed similar advice. The use of snuff, tobacco, and ardent spirits was in all cases to be discouraged. It was because the leader desired above all things that his preachers should be good patterns and advisers of others, that he took such pains in advising them. His advice to these itinerants was, 'Spend all the morning, or at least five hours in twenty-four, in reading *the most useful* books, and that regularly and constantly. "But I read only the Bible." Then you ought to teach others to read only the Bible, and, by parity of reason, to *hear only* the Bible. . . . This is rank enthusiasm. If you need no book but the Bible, you are got above St. Paul. He wanted others too.' As many of the preachers were uneducated men in the strict sense, their leader supplied them with an answer to the question, Who are the Methodists? 'Those who remain with Mr. Wesley are worthy Church of England men,' it is said in *A Short History of Methodism* issued in 1764 'They love her Articles, her Homilies, her Liturgy, her discipline, and unwillingly vary from it in any instance. All who preach among them declare, "We are all by nature children of wrath. But by grace we are saved through faith—saved both from the guilt and the power of sin." They endeavour to live according to what they preach, and to be plain Bible Christians.'

Wesley never wished his followers to practise self-denial which he did not practise himself; his example was in advance of what he could expect them to show. He regarded himself as merely the steward of what he possessed, so that everything

beyond what was needed for his own bare wants was distributed in charity. When Miss Lewen, who established an Orphanage at Leytonstone, left him £1000, in 1786, Wesley is supposed to have possessed more money than he ever had before of his own. His sister, Mrs. Hall, being in need through having married a worthless man, who had deserted her, was almost too late in asking for a gift. 'Dear Patty, you do not consider money never stays with *me*; it would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find a way into my heart.' This charity to the poor shown by himself and his followers found many ways of expressing itself. In severe wintry weather there were then, as now, many famishing people in London, and the Foundery may possibly have had the first soup-kitchen of its kind established, where pease-soup and broth were served out to the hungry. The travelling preachers were also expected to be kind to their horses by avoiding hard riding, and to take notice at an inn that the beast was well 'rubbed, fed, and bedded.'

As years passed by the opposition and persecution of mobs, frequently encouraged by those in authority, abated; but this was owing not only to the spread of religion, but to some wholesome lessons which the rioters were taught in the Court of King's Bench, and even to accidents which befell the rioters themselves. In one instance a notorious mob-leader at Sheffield was drowned in the river Don, his last words being, 'Another dip, and then for a bit more sport with the Methodists.' Stalbridge in Dorset was 'long the seat of war, by a senseless,

insolent mob, encouraged by their betters ;' but after the Court of King's Bench prescribed for them in a way that proved there was law for the preachers, the opposition ceased, and then Wesley himself would preach to a large and attentive assembly. South Shields was also a seat of war, but there a cock-pit was turned into a chapel.

A man who travelled as much as Wesley was sure to have his share of accidents, and when he was over sixty years of age these may have been harder to bear. While on his way to Shoreham, in December 1765, he was severely shaken and bruised through his horse falling ; and about six months later we find him meeting with a perilous adventure in a bog near Solway Firth. 'At the third plunge, he (the horse) threw me on one side, and we both made shift to scramble out,' says Wesley. 'I was covered with fine, soft mud, from my feet to the crown of my head ; yet, blessed be God, not hurt at all.'

CHAPTER XIII

REMARKABLE PERSONS NOTED IN WESLEY'S JOURNAL

IF space allow, mention might be made of all Wesley's preachers. Thus John Prickard, 1744-1784, was a devoted man, who in his brief life saw much of adventure among Welsh mountains, in Ireland, and in England. Jonathan Maskew, 1713-1793, only ten years younger than Wesley himself, became one of the veterans of the band; and although he took such a serious view of life that he was never seen even to smile, felt in death 'all the dawning transports of the ethereal visions.' Matthias Joyce, 1754-1814, a man of a most loving and peaceful disposition, persevering and successful as a preacher, was a convert from Romanism, and in early life, while engaged in the printing trade, he was famous for leading a wild life.

It is known by all who have given the work due attention that Wesley's Journal is one of the most remarkable works of its kind in the language. It is comprised in four substantial octavo volumes; but notwithstanding its length the interest never flags, and the picture presented of eighteenth-century life in these kingdoms is tolerably complete. Religion,

social manners, and customs, men and books, all in turn come in for notice, showing that Wesley was an omnivorous reader of fine discerning critical powers. That his carefully annotated copy of Shakespeare should have been destroyed because the preacher John Pawson thought that the publication would become a scandal, is a matter for lasting regret.

It is to be feared that villainies of various kinds were much more easily practised during the eighteenth century than in our own day; and here and there the Journal affords us a glimpse of what was possible. Take this example—

‘About this time (March, 1737), Mr. Lacy of Thunderbold called upon me, when observing him to be in a deep sadness, I asked what was the reason of it; and a terrible one indeed he gave, in the following relation: In 1733, David Jones, a saddler, a middle-aged man, who had for some time before lived at Nottingham, being at Bristol, met a person there, who, after giving him some account of Georgia, asked whether he would go thither, adding, his trade (that of a saddler) was an exceeding good trade there, upon which he might live creditably and comfortably. He objected his want of money to pay his passage and buy some tools, which he should have need of. The gentleman (Captain W.) told him he would supply him with that, and hire him a shop when he came to Georgia, wherein he might follow his business, and so repay him when it suited his convenience. Accordingly to Georgia they went, where, soon after his arrival, his master (as he now styled himself) sold him to Mr. Lacy, who set him to work with the rest

of his servants in clearing land. He commonly appeared much more thoughtful than the rest, often stealing into the woods alone. He was now sent to do some work on an island, three or four miles from Mr. Lacy's great plantation. Thence he desired the other servants to return without him, saying he would stay and kill a deer. This was on a Saturday. On Monday they found him on the shore, with his gun by him, and the forepart of his head shot to pieces. In his pocket was a paper book; all the leaves thereof were fair, except one, on which ten or twelve verses were written.

““Death could not a more sad retinue find;
Sickness and pain before, and darkness all behind.””

Thus an ordinary tradesman could be persuaded to emigrate from Bristol—which grew rich on the slave trade—and being tempted by fair offers, could be sold as a slave on his arrival!

At the outset of the Revival Wesley was made the subject of the most absurd reports. In 1741 it was openly declared that he had been convicted for selling spirits without a license, that he kept Romish priests in his house, and that he was mixed up in a scheme to restore Popery in these islands.

The success attending the dispensing of medicine was not a little remarkable in that age when surgeons too often did not only do no good, but were a source of positive danger to weakly patients. When, in December, 1746, a beginning was made at the Foundery in London, the number who came soon increased from thirty to three hundred. ‘Through

the blessing of God,' it is said, 'many who had been ill for months or years were restored to perfect health.' Lending money to the poor for trading purposes was also a benefit, and 'an eminent deist' was one who supplied funds for this purpose.

One of the first members of the society in London was a man named Abraham Jones, a serious, well-living person, growing wise in his own eyes ; he saw this and the other person wrong, and was almost continually offended. He then grew colder and colder, till at length, in order to renew his friendship with the world, he went (which he had refused to do for many years) to a parish feast, and stayed there till midnight. Returning home perfectly sober, just by his own door he fell down and broke his leg. When the surgeon came, he found the bone so shattered in pieces that it could not be set. Then it was, when he perceived he could not live, that the terrors of the Lord came about him. 'I found him in great darkness of soul, owing to the just hand of God. We prayed for him in full confidence that God would return ; and He did in part reveal Himself again.' This providence made a profound impression on the society in London.

The self-denial and persevering devotion of many of the early preachers, some of whom may have found no biographers, were beyond what one might expect flesh and blood to endure. Under the date of September, 1750, we find an account of one of these.

'John Jane was never well after walking from Edworth to Hainton on an exceeding hot day, which

threw him into a fever. But he was in great peace and love, even to those who greatly wanted love to him. He was some time at Alice Shadforth's house, with whom he daily talked of the things of God. He was never without the love of God, spent much time in private prayer, and joined likewise with her in prayer several times in a day. On Friday, August 24, growing as she thought stronger in body, he sat in the evening by the fireside ; about six he fetched a deep sigh, and never spoke more. He was alive till the same hour on Saturday, at which, without any struggle, or any sign of pain, with a smile on his face, he passed away. His last words were, "I find the love of God in Christ Jesus." All his clothes, linen and woollen stockings, hat, and wig, are not thought sufficient to answer his funeral expenses, which amount to £1 17s. 3d. All the money he had was one shilling and fourpence. Enough for any unmarried preacher of the Gospel to leave to his executors.'

After preaching at Osmotherley on April 27, 1752, Wesley met with a singular character. 'I was desired to visit a person who had been an eminent scoffer at all religion ; but was now, they said, "in a strange way." I found her in a *strange way* indeed, either raving mad or possessed of the devil. The woman herself affirmed that the devil had appeared to her the day before ; and after talking some time, leaped upon and grievously tormented her ever since. We prayed with her. Her agonies ceased. She fell asleep, and awaked in the morning calm and easy.'

In 1756 the wife of a silversmith at Cork—‘a person of piety and veracity’—gave Wesley an account of something which happened to her in early life :—

‘About thirty years ago I was addressed by way of marriage, by Mr. Richard Mercier, then a volunteer in the army. The young gentleman was quartered at that time in Charleville, where my father lived, who approved of his addresses, and directed me to look upon him as my future husband. When the regiment left the town, he promised to return in two months and marry me. From Charleville he went to Dublin ; thence to his father’s, and from thence to England ; where, his father having bought him a cornetcy of horse, he purchased many ornaments for the wedding ; and returning to Ireland, let us know that he would be at our house in Charleville in a few days. On this the family was busied to prepare for his reception, and the ensuing marriage ; when one night, my sister Molly and I being asleep in our bed, I was awakened by the sudden opening of the side-curtain, and, starting up, saw Mr. Mercier standing by the bedside. He was wrapped in a loose sheet, and had a napkin, folded like a nightcap, on his head. He looked at me very earnestly, and lifting up the napkin, which much shaded his face, showed me the left side of his head, all bloody and covered with his brains. The room meantime was quite light. My terror was excessive, which was still increased by his stooping over the bed and embracing me in his arms. My cries alarmed the whole family, who came crowding into the room. Upon their entrance he

gently withdrew his arms, and ascended, as it were, through the ceiling. I continued for some time in strong fits. When I could speak, I told them what I had seen. One of them, going a day or two after to the postmaster for letters, found him reading the newspapers, in which was an account that Cornet Mercier, going into Christ Church belfry in Dublin, just after the bells had been ringing, and standing under the bells, one of them, which was turned bottom upwards, suddenly turned again, struck one side of his head, and killed him on the spot. On further inquiry, we found he was struck on the left side of his head.'

In June, 1765, Wesley received an account of her late husband from a woman named Prudence Nixon :—

‘In November last, on a Sunday evening, he was uncommonly fervent in prayer, and found such a desire as he never had before to depart and to be with Christ. In the night she awaked, and found him quite stiff, without either sense or motion. Supposing him to be either dying or dead, she broke out into a vehement agony of prayer, and cried for half an hour together, “Lord Jesus! Give me George! Take him not away!” Soon after he opened his eyes, and said earnestly, “You had better have let me go!” Presently he was raving mad, and began to curse and blaspheme in the most horrid manner. This he continued to do for several days, appearing to be under the full power of an unclean spirit. At the latter end of the week she cried out, “Lord, I am willing! I am willing he should go to

Thee." Quickly his understanding returned, and he again rejoiced with joy unspeakable. He tenderly thanked her for giving him up to God, kissed her, lay down and died.'

On Monday, March 10, 1788, Wesley visited a wax-work exhibition at Spring Gardens, and as there were life-size models of the then reigning monarchs he gives a note respecting them. 'It exhibits most of the crowned heads in Europe, and shows their characters in their faces,' he says. 'Sense and majesty appear in the King of Spain; dulness and sottishness in the King of France; infernal subtlety in the late King of Prussia (as well as in the skeleton Voltaire); calmness and humanity in the emperor, and King of Portugal; exquisite stupidity in the Prince of Orange; and amazing coarseness, with everything that is unamiable, in the Czarina.'

The house of Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell at Lewisham was a favourite retreat of the brothers Wesley from the time of the early years of the Methodist Revival until their latter years. They took their farewell of the place on Wednesday, August 24, 1782; *e.g.*: 'My brother and I paid our last visit to Lewisham, and spent a few pensive hours with the relict of our good friend, Mr. Blackwell. We took one more walk round the garden and meadow, which he took so much pains to improve. Upwards of forty years this has been my place of retirement, when I could spend two or three days from London.'

CHAPTER XIV

WESLEY'S LATER DAYS

THE great Scriptural doctrines of the Revival, as preached by Wesley or Whitefield, continued to be so unfashionable or contrary to the taste of many scholars or professors, that in 1768 half a dozen students were expelled from the University of Oxford for holding Methodistical tenets and living accordingly. This act of persecution occasioned much commotion throughout the country, and many pamphlets were published in favour of the young men or against them. It was naturally thought 'that as these six gentlemen were expelled for having too much religion, it would be very proper to inquire into the conduct of some who had too little.'

But while the heads of houses and others at the University thus endeavoured to check the great movement, Wesley about this time had a hundred and twenty preachers, and the members of his societies throughout the country were nearly thirty thousand. The catholic-minded Whitefield could rejoice in such success as much as those who were supposed to be in another theological camp ; and this may remind us

that in September, 1769, Whitefield, who was about to cross the Atlantic for the thirteenth time, took final and loving farewell of his friend. About twelve months later the great field-preacher passed away to his reward, his last sermon of two hours in length being one of his most amazing efforts. Long years before, the two Evangelical leaders had agreed that the longest liver of the two should preach the other's funeral sermon. Wesley fulfilled this agreement on November 18, 1770, by preaching first in Tottenham Court Chapel, and in the evening at Moorfields Tabernacle, on the appropriate words, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' The people who crowded both chapels showed an extraordinary eagerness to hear while Wesley paid his tribute to his friend's worth, and urged that the doctrines of the New Birth and Justification by Faith should still be preached. 'Keep close to these good, old, unfashionable doctrines, how many soever contradict and blaspheme,' said the preacher. 'Go on, my brethren, in the name of the Lord, and in the power of His might. Let brother no more lift up sword against brother; rather put ye on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, brotherly kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.' In his will Whitefield left John and Charles Wesley each a mourning-ring, 'in token of my indissoluble union with them, in heart and Christian affection, notwithstanding our differences in judgment about some particular points of doctrine.'

As coming just before some rather bitter and

prolonged discussions on matters of doctrine which followed, this act of Whitefield seemed to come as a gracious reminder from the other world that those who preach the cardinal truths of the Gospel are one in Christ. A few months later, when the press was sending forth pamphlets from opposing theological camps, Wesley clearly proved, in a letter to Fletcher of Madeley, how he had endeavoured to preach the Gospel:—‘I always did, for between these thirty and forty years, clearly assert the total fall of man and his utter inability to do any good of himself; the absolute necessity of the grace and Spirit of God to raise even a good thought or desire in our hearts; the Lord’s rewarding no work, and accepting of none but so far as they proceed from His preventing, convincing, and converting grace through the Beloved; the blood and righteousness of Christ being the sole meritorious cause of our salvation.’ The great evangelist then asks, with some show of reason on his side, ‘Who is there in England that has asserted these things more strongly and steadily than I have done?’

Notwithstanding that Charles Wesley had for some time practically ceased to be an itinerant, thus leaving to his brother the formidable labour of visiting the societies throughout the country, Wesley now thought of giving part of his time to the American Colonies. Whitefield had left his mark in many of the sea-ports of the New World, but now travelling preachers were much wanted. ‘In the back parts, which are now grown populous, the inhabitants are still in a state of deplorable ignorance,’ wrote a friend

at New York. 'If some zealous and able teachers would engage heartily in the work of their conversion, how soon might rivers spring forth in the desert, and then owls and dragons of the wilderness give honour to God.' If this visit to America was really entertained, it showed extraordinary enterprise on the part of one who was nearly seventy years of age. Partly in consequence of a painful affection which yielded to medical treatment, the preacher began to show signs of wear, which moved his friends to provide him with a carriage, so that horseback travelling might be given up. He had become so acclimatized to rough weather, to wet clothes, to standing bareheaded in piercing winds, to lying on the grass where inclination prompted, etc., that nothing seemed to harm him; but, now that age was coming on, the sheltered seat of a coach might well supersede the saddle.

The year 1772, when Wesley entered upon his seventieth year, was a time of distress, partly brought on by a succession of harvests below the average, but more the result of war and bad government. Harrowing accounts of the starved condition of the poor appeared in the newspapers; and while the Common Council of London petitioned that the ports should be opened for the admission of breadstuffs, one of Wesley's prescriptions was that the waste of grain by distillation should be prohibited. His reckoning that 25,000 quarters of corn were used in London alone for this purpose seems to be incredible, showing that the drinking customs of the people were far in excess of what we have to deplore to-day. 'Have we not reason to believe,' he adds, 'that half the

wheat produced in the kingdom is every year consumed, not by so harmless a way as throwing it into the sea, but by converting it into deadly poison—poison that naturally destroys, not only the strength and life, but also the morals of our countrymen?' In writing thus he was not speaking as a teetotaler, however, that crusade not yet having been suggested by any reformer; but when he asks, 'Why are thousands of people starving, perishing for want, in every part of England?' his answer affords a lurid insight into the misery of multitudes, when the era of cheap living was changing into one of dearness and difficulty, when the resources of the nation would be wasted in exhausting and foolish wars. Concerning the distress, Wesley adds, 'I have seen it with my eyes in every corner of the land. I have known those who could only afford to eat a little coarse food every other day. I have known one picking up stinking sprats from a dunghill, and carrying them home for herself and her children. I have known another gathering the bones which the dogs had left in the streets, and making broth of them, to prolong a wretched life. Such is the case, at this day, of multitudes of people, in a land flowing, as it were, with milk and honey; abounding with all the necessaries, the conveniences, the superfluities of life.' Wesley not only wrote about such things to excite the interest of others, he and his people did what they were able to relieve the poor. A band was now organized to visit the London workhouses.

If possible, the times became more and more gloomy, and when the American War drew on, Wesley,

in departing from his usual rule of letting politics alone, gave some offence by giving advice to the colonists. There were other troubles or perplexities. When he took his carriage to Ireland in 1773, the custom-house authorities would not allow the vehicle to be landed ; but when it was found that, had it gone on shore, it would have been spoiled, either by accident or by the mobs, the preacher became obliged to the Commissioners. Then the Foundery book-steward, Samuel Franks, in a fit of insanity hanged himself ; and soon after Wesley had to undergo a painful operation. Writing at this time concerning his book business, he says, 'I have laboured as much as many writers ; and all my labour has gained me, in seventy years, a debt of five or six hundred pounds.'

When Wesley was at Newcastle at midsummer, 1774, he providentially escaped death by accident ; and as he says, 'I am persuaded that both evil and good angels had a large share in this transaction,' the account may be given in his own words. In driving to Horsley, he was accompanied by a Mr. Hopper, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, and two little girls :—

'About two miles from the town, just on the brow of the hill, on a sudden both the horses set out, without any visible cause, and flew down the hill like an arrow. In a minute John fell off the coach-box. The horses then went on at full speed, sometimes to the edge of the ditch on the right, sometimes on the left. A cart came up against them ; they avoided it exactly as if the man had been on the box. A narrow bridge was at the foot of the hill. They went directly over the middle of it. They ran up the next hill with the

same speed ; many persons meeting us, but getting out of the way. Near the top of the hill was a gate which led into a farmer's yard. It stood open. They turned short and ran through it, without touching the gate on one side, or the post on the other. I thought the gate which is on the other side of the yard, and is shut, will stop them ; but they rushed through it, as if it had been a cobweb, and galloped on through the cornfield. The little girls cried out, " Grandpapa, save us !" I told them, " Nothing will hurt you ; do not be afraid ;" feeling no more fear or care than if I had been sitting in my study. The horses ran on till they came to the edge of a steep precipice. Just then Mr. Smith, who could not overtake us before, galloped in between. They stopped in a moment. Had they gone on ever so little, he and we must have gone down together.'

Wesley's freedom from excitement in such a crisis probably arose more from trust in God than from strength of nerve. At the same time he accounted his mode of life—early rising, constant travelling and preaching, and frugality in living—as the most healthful that mortal could follow. Speaking of himself at seventy-one years of age, he says, 'I find just the same strength as I did thirty years ago. That my sight is considerably better now, and my nerves firmer, than they were then. That I have none of the infirmities of old age, and have lost several I had in youth.' About three years later, he says, 'Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry ; I never undertake any more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit.' What he was at seventy, Wesley

continued till the last ; and speaking of him in 1783, Tyerman says : ' Here we have a man, his age eighty, without indulgences, feeding for eight months in every year chiefly at the tables of the poor, sleeping on all sorts of beds in all sorts of rooms, without a wife, without a child, really without a home ; and yet a man always cheerful, always happy, always hard at work, flying with all the sprightliness of youth throughout the three kingdoms, preaching twice every day, indoors and out-of-doors, in churches, chapels, cottages, and sheds.'

The distress of the poor seemed to increase while the American War continued, and such a crisis naturally moved the sympathy of a man like Wesley, who habitually visited the suffering in their own homes, and collected money for their relief. Many characteristic anecdotes of his charity might be given. One day he had been dining with a friend near Blackfriars, where a well-known artist had prevailed upon him to accept of ten guineas for a cast of his face. After leaving the house he came on an auctioneer who was selling the goods of a dying man. ' What's the debt ? ' asked Wesley, and on hearing that it was ten guineas, he at once handed over the money, and then confessed to his companions that he saw why God had sent it. When about to leave Norwich in 1783, with a light purse, he spoke rather hastily to a crowd of beggars who surrounded him, and then, when stepping into his coach, he slipped and fell. ' It's all right ; it is only what I deserved,' he said ; ' for if I had no other good to give, I ought at least to have given them good words.' If he had had the money

he would have given to them willingly. And yet this was the man who was officially ordered in 1776 to make a return of his plate on account of the tax ! 'I have two silver spoons at London, and two at Bristol,' replied Wesley. 'This is all the plate which I have at present; and I shall not buy any more, while so many round me want bread.' His charity also extended to ending feuds whenever possible. Thus, while he was at the house of a local preacher near Bristol, who kept a school, two boys who had been fighting were brought to him. Wesley told them to shake hands, and then to kiss each other. 'Now, come to me,' he added, folding some bread-and-butter, and desiring each to take a part. 'Now you have broken bread together,' he said; and placing a hand on each head, he blessed them. The boys became friends, and never forgot their adventure.

In April, 1777, Wesley laid the foundation-stone of the present City Road chapel, which took the place of the Foundery, where the meetings had been held for over a third of a century; and on November 1 in the following year he opened the building, and in 1779 first occupied the new house in which he died in 1791. While this was in course of erection he several times visited Dr. Dodd in Wood Street Compter, and also in Newgate previous to his execution at Tyburn for forgery. It had been Wesley's lot to visit many remarkable prisoners, but he had never seen such a one as this, although he was quite satisfied that Dodd was in a penitent state. After the Anti-Popery riots of 1780, Wesley also passed an hour with Lord George Gordon in the Tower, when

the conversation was on Popery and true religion. During the riots enormous havoc was committed in London by the mobs, and a large number of lives were lost. Wesley himself had often been absurdly charged with being a Romanist in disguise ; but in point of fact he rather thought that the system of the Pope was dangerous to liberty. ‘Some time since, a Romish priest came to one I knew ; and after talking with her largely, broke out, “You are no heretic ! You have the experience of a real Christian !” “And would you,” she asked, “burn me alive ?” He said, “God forbid, unless it were for the good of the Church !”’

Wesley was ever making additions to his mental stores, after the manner of one who intermeddled with all knowledge ; but as regarded the cardinal truths of the Gospel he was at the close of his life just about where he was at the opening of the Revival. ‘Forty years ago,’ he said, at the age of seventy-five, ‘I knew and preached every Christian doctrine which I preach now.’ As supplementary to his preaching, his efforts to enlighten his followers by the press knew of no abatement through his advance in years. Soon after he had become an itinerant the idea of issuing a monthly magazine had been suggested, but such a monthly serial was not commenced until January 1, 1778, the name being *The Arminian Magazine*, while the size was 80 pages, 8vo, on fine paper, at a shilling. All along, the Book Room at the Foundery had been busy with its issues ; but in 1779, the Naval and Military Bible Society, which had for its object the supplying of the Scriptures in a pocket size to soldiers

and sailors, sent forth the first parcel of Bibles from Wesley's Chapel in West Street. A little later, or in 1782, there was instituted a society for Distributing Religious Tracts among the Poor, each member of which had to subscribe not less than half a guinea, for which tracts were to be sent. 'I cannot but earnestly recommend this to all those who desire to see true Scriptural Christianity spread throughout these nations,' said Wesley. 'Men wholly unawakened will not take pains to read the Bible. They have no relish for it. But a small tract may engage their attention for half-an-hour ; and may, by the blessing of God, prepare them for going forward.' Much about the same time, or in 1780, the Methodist Hymn-book, which has been in use till the present time, was also published.

Meanwhile, writing in 1784, Wesley was able to say, 'The work of God goes on with a steady pace in various parts of England. But still the love of many will wax cold, while many others are continually added to supply their place. In the West of England, in Lancashire, and in Yorkshire, God still mightily makes bare His arm. He convinces many, justifies many, and many are perfected in love.' The times seemed to be fast changing for the better, so far as preaching the Gospel was concerned. Dr. Lowth, the then Bishop of London, paid the utmost deference to Wesley when the two met at dinner at the house of Mr. Blackwell, of Lewisham ; while, instead of being mobbed and repelled, the evangelist's services were sought in all parts of the country. What Wesley said of Preston might have been said of many other

places, all the old prejudice seemed to be wearing away. At the same time, new circuits of great promise, one being the Isle of Man, would be undertaken, while a favourite preaching place, where twenty thousand hearers would assemble, was Gwennap Pit, in Cornwall. The change was most apparent where in former days the opposition had been most violent. The unflagging zeal of Wesley himself was quite phenomenal in a man eighty years old. He even spent seventeen days in Holland in the summer of 1783. During that same summer illness overtook him, until both the preacher and his friends thought that the end was come; but God ordered otherwise. It was destined that he should crowd an immense deal of service into his very last years. From time to time, more particularly on an anniversary of his birthday, we find him taking note of his growth in years, and his general freedom from the ordinary infirmities of age. When he was eighty-five, however, some of the symptoms of advanced age appeared. Old age, by what he called 'gentle steps,' was stealing upon him; 'But I bless God,' he added, '"the grasshopper" is "not a burden." I am still capable of travelling, and my memory is much the same as ever it was; and so, I think, is my understanding.' The inevitable trial of very old people, that of having their friends fall around them, of course fell to Wesley's lot. He visited Dr. Johnson a short time before the doctor's death; but a greater trial was the passing away, a few months later, of Perronet of Shoreham, and Fletcher of Madeley, the two friends to whom Wesley probably opened his heart more than to any others.

He had hoped, indeed, that Fletcher would become his successor ; but in the strict sense of the word a man like Wesley could really have no successor. He laid the foundations of a work which would abide, but such a general in the field was no more to be found.

Wesley was always a happy man ; according to his own confession he dared not to fret ; but if the last ten years of his life had been his happiest, it would not have been without reason, for it was during that period that he was encouraged by seeing such fruit of his labours as has rarely indeed fallen to the lot of any other Christian teacher. Physically, Wesley continued to be a wonder to himself, and firmly believed that his continued capacity to travel and preach came direct from God who had called him to His work. But, as he wrote in 1788 : 'May we not impute it, as inferior means : First, to my constant exercise and change of air ? Second, to my never having lost a night's sleep, sick or well, at land or sea, since I was born ? Third, To my having sleep at command ; so that whenever I feel myself almost worn out, I call it, and it comes, day or night ? Fourth, to my having constantly, for above sixty years, risen at four in the morning ? Fifth, to my constant preaching at five in the morning, for above fifty years ? Sixth, to my having had so little pain in my life, and so little sorrow, or anxious care ? '

In his old age he had the happiness of seeing the seed he had for so long sown spring up in all directions into an abundant harvest. Not only had persecution seemed to have quite died out, but Wesley

was generally cordially welcomed, and instead of having the churches closed against him, the invitations to preach were more numerous than could be accepted. His journeys were now a sort of triumphal progress in which the clergy and others vied with each to honour the preacher. On the occasion of his last visit to Cornwall, in 1789, his congregation at Gwennap Pit, said to be the finest amphitheatre of its kind in Great Britain, was estimated at over twenty thousand; and now, on every successive Whit-Monday, a commemorative service is still held there. The increase of members during the year 1787 was nearly four thousand throughout the kingdom, while striking accounts concerning the number of conversions came from the United States. In 1790 the preaching circuits throughout the world were 240, an increase of 156 in ten years. In the same period the 541 itinerant preachers showed an increase of 328, while the 134,549 members showed an increase of 82,215. Wesley might well say, 'The tables are turned.' His disinterestedness or self-denial was shown till the end, for he continued to receive only £30 a year from the circuit fund. His income from his books was now close upon £800 a year, or even more; but beyond a trifling outlay for clothes, the whole was given to the cause or to the poor.

Some of the adventures of his old age were quite as diverting as those of his younger days, and, for the most part, were far more pleasant. His two nephews, Charles and Samuel, made their mark as musical geniuses, attracting the patronage of the first

personages in the land. Concerts were given at the house of their father, Charles Wesley, at which eighty persons, more or less distinguished, would sometimes be found. 'I spent an agreeable hour at a concert of my nephews,' wrote Wesley, in 1781; 'but I was a little out of my element among lords and ladies. I love plain music and plain company best.' If his host was not equal to supplying company to his taste, Wesley, on paying a visit, was quite equal to taking his company with him. Sir Robert Peel, grandfather of the Prime Minister of the same name, once told an anecdote of the preacher's resources in this direction. 'I asked Mr. Wesley, at one of his Conferences, to come and breakfast with me; and he agreed, on condition that he might bring some of his children with him. Of course I consented, and he came, accompanied by six and thirty of his itinerant preachers.

Well aware of his own advantages, Wesley was disposed to make allowances for young men, like his nephews, who had their way to make in the world. 'You are now, as it were, on the crisis of your fate, just launching into life, and ready to fix your choice, whether you will have God or the world for your happiness,' he wrote to young Charles Wesley. 'You cannot avoid being very frequently among elegant men and women that are without God in the world; but, as your *business*, rather than your *choice*, calls you into the fire, I trust that you will not be burnt.' The two musicians were still quite young men when their father, Charles Wesley, passed away in 1788, but their uncle continued to be interested in their welfare.

On the last Sunday of the year 1788, Wesley preached at All Hallows, Lombard Street, on behalf of a society for benefiting poor children. While putting on his gown, Wesley said to the attendant, "Sir, it is above fifty years since I first preached in this church ; I remember it from a particular circumstance. I came without a sermon, and, going up the pulpit stairs, I hesitated, and returned into the vestry, under much mental confusion and agitation. A woman who stood by, noticed my concern, and said, "Pray, sir, what is the matter?" I replied, "I have not brought a sermon with me." Putting her hand on my shoulder, she said, "Is that all? Cannot you trust God for a sermon?" This question had such an effect upon me, that I ascended the pulpit, preached extempore, with great freedom to myself and acceptance to the people, and have never since taken a written sermon into the pulpit.'

Such an adventure as that seemed to be almost providential ; for had Wesley continued to be the slave of a manuscript in the pulpit, he could not have become the great open-air evangelist of the eighteenth-century Revival. To this it may be added that he could not have done what he did if he had not been a very careful economist of his time. 'John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure,' said Dr. Johnson to Boswell. 'He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have his talk out, as I do.' As Moore remarks, Wesley did as he did not so much from having no leisure, but because he was under the law to Christ. When through his

sister, Mrs. Hall, Wesley first visited Dr. Johnson, and dined with him, 'the doctor conformed to Mr. Wesley's hours, and appointed two o'clock; the dinner, however, was not ready till three,' as Moore tells us. 'They conversed till that time. Mr. Wesley had set apart two hours to spend with his learned host. In consequence of this, he rose up as soon as dinner was ended and departed. The doctor was exceedingly disappointed, and could not conceal his chagrin. Mrs. Hall said, "Why, doctor, my brother has been with you two hours!" He replied, "Two hours, madam? I could talk all day, and all night, too, with your brother." It is well known that Johnson harboured great esteem for Wesley's unfortunate sister, Mrs. Hall. 'It was surprising,' said Charles Wesley, 'how he would listen to, and bear her interrogations, and sometimes even her venturing to differ from him.'

When this great evangelist was in the last days of his life, Europe was sustaining the first violent shocks of the first French Revolution. That great upheaval, which seemed to shake the world, did not divert Wesley from his life-work in any way, however; but at the opening of the year 1790 he seemed to experience more than he had ever done before the infirmities of age. 'I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot,' he wrote. 'My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much; my mouth is hot and dry every morning. I have a lingering fever almost every day. My motion is weak and slow. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labour. I can preach and write still.' Henry Moore, who was with

Wesley when the above was written, intimates that he would never have judged from appearances that the case was thus with his leader. 'He still rose at his usual hour, four o'clock, and went through the many duties of the day, not, indeed, with the same apparent vigour, but without complaint, and with a degree of resolution that was astonishing.'

This is literally true; for during 1790—the last complete year he was to spend on earth—the daily work of this man of eighty-seven showed no abatement. After going through a full round of service in London and the suburbs, he set out as usual on his northern tour at the beginning of March. He visited a large number of towns, and at Newcastle preached to Sunday-school scholars, the entire sermon consisting of short and familiar words, no word of three syllables or more being used. He pressed forward even into Scotland, great crowds attending his services as he progressed through the North of England. Returning through Bristol, he went on to Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, reaching London on October 2 in good health and spirits. Two or three days later he set off for Rye and Winchelsea, and before the month was out he preached at Norwich and other towns in Norfolk. When he reached the opening days of 1791 he planned his tour of the country as usual, although in the last letter he sent to the United States on February 1, he said, 'Those that desire to write or to say anything to me have no time to lose, for time has shaken me by the hand, and death is not far behind.' On February 23 he rose at four o'clock as usual, and, accompanied by a friend, went

to Leatherhead, where he preached his last sermon from the words of the evangelical prophet : ' Seek ye the Lord while He may be found.' On the following day he wrote the last letter he ever penned, and this was addressed to William Wilberforce, the abolitionist, with whose friend, William Pitt, when Prime Minister, Wesley had also corresponded. To Wilberforce he now said, ' Go on, in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it.'

The day on which that letter was written was spent with a friend at Balham, when Wesley appeared to be about as well as usual ; but immediately after his return to his house, adjoining City Road Chapel, it became apparent that his work was done. He seems to have suffered no pain, and on March 1, after a somewhat restless night, he sang in bed, ' All glory to God in the sky.' He got up, and while being dressed, and while seated in his chair, he sang favourite lines. Many offered prayer in his room, and knowing that he was dying, Wesley shook hands with each, and bade each farewell. ' A little after, a person coming in, he strove to speak, but could not,' says Henry Moore. ' Finding they could not understand him, he paused a little, and with all the remaining strength he had, cried out, " THE BEST OF ALL IS, GOD IS WITH US!" then, lifting up his dying arm in token of victory, and raising his voice with a holy triumph not to be expressed, he again repeated the heart-reviving words, " THE BEST OF ALL IS, GOD IS WITH US!" ' When his sight failed, he asked, ' Who

are these?' 'Sir,' answered one, 'we are come to rejoice with you; you are going to receive your crown!' 'It is the Lord's doing,' replied the dying preacher, 'and marvellous in our eyes.' He died on Wednesday, March 2, 1791, and his remains were placed in the vault which Wesley had already prepared for himself and his preachers who might die in London, at City Road Chapel.

Thus lived and died John Wesley, one of the greatest evangelists who ever carried the Gospel to the common people. Like other men, he had his faults, he made mistakes, his judgment may sometimes have been wrong; but, taking him as a whole, he was an exemplar to his times, a benefactor to his race, a workman who needed not to be ashamed. In an age when mere rhetoric and stilted language were common in preaching and writing, he set the example of a style remarkable for its force and clearness. This struck discerning persons of his own age; it will charm the reader of to-day, more than a century after the preacher's death. 'Is this the great Mr. Wesley?' asked a lady at Lincoln, after hearing a sermon on *The One Thing Needful!* 'Why, the poorest person in the chapel might understand him!' What more valuable encomium could be conferred on a preacher? In his *Literary Anecdotes*, Nichols, who was for long editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, said of Wesley, 'Though his taste was classic, and his manners elegant, he sacrificed that society in which he was peculiarly calculated to shine; gave up those preferments which his abilities might have obtained, and devoted a long life in practising and

enforcing common duties. Instead of being "an ornament to literature," he was a blessing to his fellow-creatures; instead of being "the genius of the age," he was the servant of God.'

Thus we remember John Wesley, not only as a great Englishman, but as one of the most earnest Christian workers of the eighteenth century. While to the last he remained a devoted member of the Anglican Church, he cordially gave the right hand of fellowship to all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

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